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Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

NOVEMBER 2002



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CONTENTS

Traditional Wisdom	533	The Vedic Concept of God in All Its Aspects	556
This Month..	534	Swami Mukhyananda	
Editorial: Feverless Work	535	Divyayan Krishi Vigyan Kendra	566
Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago ...	539	Swami Gananathananda	
'You Will Be a Paramahansa!' ...	540	Jābāla Upaniṣad	569
Swami Sarvagatananda		Swami Atmapriyananda	
Education according to Vedanta	546	Glimpses of Holy Lives	571
Swami Pitambarananda		Review Article: Lakṣmi Tantra (A Pāñcarātra Text) ...	573
Six Days in Mauritius	550	Prof. Amalendu Chakraborty	
Swami Smaranananda		Reviews	575
		Reports	579

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Cover: Swami Vivekananda's Temple at Ramakrishna Math, Belur, near Kolkata.

उत्तिष्ठ
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत ।

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!

Vol. 107

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No. 11

Traditional Wisdom

SPIRITUAL TEACHER

यस्यैव स्फुरणं सदात्मकमसत्कल्पार्थकं भासते साक्षात्तत्त्वमसीति वेदवचसा यो बोधयत्याश्रितान् ।
यत्साक्षात्करणाद्भवेन्न पुनरावृत्तिर्भवाम्भोनिधौ तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥

Though based on the real, whose outward manifestations appear as illusory, ever-changing objects; who grants to those who take refuge in Him through the Vedic pronouncement ‘*Tattvamasi*’ (That thou art) the boon of immediate knowledge of Brahman, attaining which man returns no more to the realm of birth and death—to that Śrī Dakṣiṇāmūrti in the form of my guru I bow in reverence. (*Dakṣiṇāmūrti-stotram*, 3)

शरीरं सुरूपं सदा रोगमुक्तं यशश्चारु चित्रं धनं मेरुतुल्यम् ।
मनश्चेन्न लग्नं गुरोरङ्घ्रिपद्मे ततः किं ततः किं ततः किं ततः किम् ॥

Your body may be beautiful and ever in perfect health, your name and fame may be unsullied, and mountain-high may be your hoarded gold; but if your mind is not absorbed in the guru’s lotus-like feet, what of all that? Yes, what indeed will it all avail? (*Guru-aṣṭakam*, 1)

It is a mysterious law of nature that as soon as the field is ready the seed *must* come, as soon as the soul *wants* religion, the transmitter of religious force *must* come. ‘The seeking sinner meeteth the seeking Saviour.’ When the power that attracts in the receiving soul is full and ripe, the power which answers to that attraction must come. (Swami Vivekananda)

The guru should not be looked upon as an ordinary human being. His physical body is the temple in which resides the Lord. If the guru is served with this idea in mind, one comes to acquire love and devotion for him, which can then be directed towards the Lord. ... The outer guru cannot be had always. As the aspirant goes on with his spiritual practices, his power of comprehension also increases. Then his mind can act as a guide. (Swami Brahmananda)

☪ This Month ☪

Feverless Work, this month's editorial, discusses some 'fevers' associated with work and their remedies.

Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago features this month excerpts from an article entitled 'Discipleship'.

Swami Kalyananandaji's unique method of training, his attitude towards money, his love that could transform lives, his care and concern for patients, his motto of service—Swami Sarvagatanandaji describes all this in the third instalment of '**You Will Be a Paramahansa!**' The author is from Ramakrishna Vedanta Society, Boston.

In the third instalment of his article **Education according to Vedanta**, Swami Pitambaranandaji continues his discussion on the process of education, drawing examples from the *Bhagavadgita* and the Upanishads. The author is a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order.

Swami Smarananandaji, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, visited Mauritius from 26 April to 1 May 2002 on his way to South Africa. In **Six Days in Mauritius** he gives graphic descriptions of the country, of more than six decades of work there by the Ramakrishna Mission, and of the places and persons he visited, including the President of Mauritius.

In the second and concluding part of his

well-researched article **The Vedic Concept of God in All Its Aspects** Swami Mukhyanandaji discusses the inter-relationship among man, God and the universe; the need for realization of the Atman; God in popular religion; evolution of the concept of deities, their nature and significance, and meditation on them. Quoting from the *Bhagavadgita*, he concludes assuringly that irrespective of the form through which He is worshipped, God listens to His creation. A senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order, the author has a number of books and articles to his credit. He is presently in Belur Math.

Swami Gananathanandaji from Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Morabadi, Ranchi, was interviewed in Hindi by the All India Radio on 3 November 2001 about the activities of the centre, known for its pioneering strides in agriculture-based rural development. **Divyayan Krishi Vigyan Kendra** is an edited transcript of the interview, which was broadcast under the 'Youth Corner' programme of the All India Radio.

Jābāla Upaniṣad is the third instalment of the translation of this Sannyasa Upanishad by Swami Atmapriyanandaji, Principal, Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, Belur. The elaborate notes are based on Upanishad Brahmayogin's commentary.

Glimpses of Holy Lives features this month inspiring incidents from the life of the Punjabi saint Lala Ramnarayanji.

Feverless Work

EDITORIAL

A government official boasted of many miracle workers in his department. 'Indeed!' exclaimed his friend. 'Yes,' said the official. 'It is a miracle when they work.' Work is indispensable in life. According to the *Bhagavadgita*, 'None can ever rest for an instant without doing work. All are made to work in spite of themselves by the *gunas* born of *prakṛti* (nature).'¹ And work means not just physical activity. It also includes mental activities. So 'miracle workers' also work, considering their restlessness and mental gyrations. The *Gita* says that even bare maintenance of the body becomes impossible without work.²

The Problem of Work

In today's competitive world work is inevitably associated with tension, stress and health setback. People eagerly look forward to respite from work to do something of their liking. The very need for respite from work indicates that the problem could be in *how* we work. People look forward to the day they will be free from all care and work—in short, retirement. But how many people retire with a sense of fulfilment? 'Miracle workers' most certainly do not. They live, move and have their being in frustration.

Is there a way to work that can bring fulfilment and joy even during work? That is what karma yoga is about. That apparently is the main thrust of the *Bhagavadgita*. That is again what Swami Vivekananda prescribed as an independent path to perfection. Here are his assuring words promising a way out: 'Do not fly away from the wheels of the world-machine, but stand inside it and learn the secret of work. Through proper work done inside, it is also possible to come out. Through this machinery itself is the way out.'³

Fevers of Different Kinds

An important verse in the third chapter of the *Bhagavadgita* refers to fever associated with work: 'Surrendering all action to Me, with your mind intent on the Self, free yourself from expectation and selfishness and fight without fever.'⁴ Though Sri Krishna advised Arjuna thus to make him fight, we too can draw lessons from it in our fight with the environment—outside and inside. The outside environment refers to our day-to-day work and interaction with people. The inside environment refers to our own mind, its prejudices, likes, dislikes, desires, and so on. In short, it is a prescription on how to fight the battle of life.

'Fever' in the above verse has different shades of meanings. Sri Shankara interprets it as repentance (*santāpa*) and remorse (*śoka*). Some more forms of fever are tension, disappointment, excitement and fussing about work. Some people are so constituted that they cannot possibly be in peace unless there is war. They cannot work without getting worked up—both themselves and others. Again, there are some who cannot do without excitement in work: something novel, something new, every day. Fussing about work—more output of noise than work—is a way of doing work (or making noise) with some others. All these fevers mean only drain of precious mental energy that could have been used to further one's own spiritual growth besides improving the quality of work. Is there any medicine for these fevers?

Calmness amid Activity

Swami Vivekananda's eight brilliant lectures on karma yoga are packed with gems of wisdom. He advocated selfless work as an independent means to manifest perfection. Ac-

cording to him, calmness is a prerequisite to sane and productive work: 'The calmer we are and the less disturbed our nerves, the more shall we love and the better will our work be.'⁵ A significant verse from the *Gita* emphasizes this truth: 'He who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction—he is wise among men. He is a yogi and he has performed all action.'⁶ The import of Swami Nikhilanandaji's commentary on this verse follows: Action belongs to the body, mind and the senses and is a function of the *gunas*. The Atman is beyond these instruments of action and is itself actionless. The ignorant regard the Atman as active. The yogi, on the other hand, regards the Atman as actionless even if his body and mind are active. This is inaction in action. An ignorant person may strive hard to remain inactive because he regards work as the cause of suffering, and inaction as the way to knowledge. Though apparently inactive, such a person is really active, since his mind is full of ideas. A wise man sees action in such inaction.⁷

Thus even the so-called 'selfless' work needs an alert Self behind to effect any transformation in the individual. In other words, while engaged in work we need to identify ourselves with a higher dimension of our personality, behind the body, mind and the senses. Especially while doing repetitive work—which, most of the time, is monotonous in most cases—our body is busy doing the work, but the mind usually roams about, dwelling on some past or future event. It hardly dwells on the present, the task in hand. While repetitive work might mean some mastery over work, the very restlessness of the mind will tire the person, not to speak of not effecting any positive change in him. Performing work with calmness, on the other hand, gives us an opportunity to observe the vagaries of the mind. It is this observation of the mind's wanderings and bringing it back to the task in hand that forms an important step in converting work into a tool for spiritual progress.

Self-conscious Activity

A calm performance of our work sharpens our witness attitude, the ability to observe the mind's vagaries. This means awakening of *buddhi*, the discriminative faculty in us. One becomes more alert and conscious about one's work. One can no more afford to be careless about work, for carelessness means giving in to the unruly mind. Swami Vivekananda called this 'self-conscious activity': 'Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.'⁸ Again it is this self-conscious activity he meant when he said, 'When you are doing any work, do not think of anything beyond. Do it as worship, as the highest worship, and devote your whole life to it for the time being.'⁹

The secret thus is not to think of anything beyond the work in hand. A person who has learnt to be alert in his work will also learn to be one-pointed in his devotions and meditation. Sri Ramakrishna trained his disciples not only in spiritual life. He paid as much attention to the way they worked. Let us hear his disciple Swami Turiyananda:

One day at Dakshineswar the Master said to me: 'Go to the Panchavati. Some devotees had a picnic there. See if they have left anything behind. If you find anything, bring it here.' I went and found an umbrella in one place, a knife in another place, and some other articles. I gathered them up and took them to the Master. The knife had been borrowed from him. I was just placing it on the shelf when he said: 'Where are you putting it? No, not there. Put it underneath this small bedstead. That is where it belongs. You must put everything in its proper place. Suppose I need the knife during the night. If you put it anywhere you please, I will have to go around the room in the dark, stretching out my arms in search of it, wondering where you put it. Is such service a service? No! You do things as you like and thereby only cause trouble. If you want to serve properly, you should completely forget yourself.'¹⁰

Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi was a shining example of inaction in action and action in inaction. She advocated and lived an active life, but had her mind deeply anchored in the spiritual Reality within. That was the secret of her life amid her demanding relatives, some of whom were insane. On a devoted study of her life one cannot but be amazed at her spiritual ministrations, motherly love, her steering the fledgling Ramakrishna Order of monks with unerring intuition—all this despite being placed in unenviable, worldly surroundings. In the words of Sister Nivedita, 'Her life was one long stillness of prayer.'¹¹ Holy Mother had this to say on the importance of work: 'One must always do some work. Only through work can one remove the bondage of work. Total detachment comes later. One should not be without work even for a moment. Work helps one to fend off idle thoughts. If one is without work such thoughts rush into one's mind.'¹²

In the light of the above discussion, it is needless to say that a person who is slipshod in work or skips his allotted work ostensibly to meditate, only fools himself. For it is the same mind that is behind both the careless work and the frustrating attempts at meditation.

Work for God's Sake

Besides trying to identify ourselves with the Atman while performing our work, offering the fruits of our actions to God can conduce to reduction in fever and progress in spiritual life. The verse quoted at the beginning of this essay says, 'Surrendering all action to Me, with your mind intent on the Self, free yourself from expectation and selfishness and fight without fever.' According to Sri Shankara, we need to work with the mind intent on the Atman, with discriminating wisdom and free from the idea that 'this is mine' but with the idea that 'I am an agent and I work for God as a servant.' The Lord assures in the *Gita*, 'From whom arise the activity of all beings, by whom all this is pervaded—wor-

shipping Him by one's work, one attains perfection.'¹³ Resigning mentally all deeds to Me, having Me as the highest goal, resorting to *buddhiyoga* fix your mind ever on Me.'¹⁴

Fever Medicines

We saw that expectation, tension, fussing about work, repentance and remorse are some forms of fever associated with work. Sri Ramanuja interprets 'fever' as the inner anxiety that makes one wonder 'what will happen to me with the sins accumulated from time without beginning?' He also prescribes the cure: 'Perform karma yoga remembering that "It is the supreme Person whom I worship with work; He will release me from bondage."' ¹⁵

Sri Ramakrishna dissuaded people from dwelling on sin; rather he emphasized faith in the divine Name:

Will you tell me one thing? Why did you harp so much on sin? By repeating a hundred times 'I am a sinner', one verily becomes a sinner. One should have such faith as to be able to say, 'What? I have taken the name of God; how can I be a sinner?' God is our Father and Mother. Tell him, 'O Lord, I have committed sins, but I won't repeat them.' Chant His name and purify your body and mind. Purify your tongue by singing God's holy name.¹⁶

Expectation and tension are born of attachment to results of action. In his celebrated lecture 'Work and Its Secret' Swami Vivekananda stresses perfecting the means rather than dwelling on the results: 'Whenever failure comes if we analyse it critically, in ninety-nine per cent of cases we shall find that it was because we did not pay attention to the means. Proper attention to the finishing, strengthening, of the means is what we need. With the means all right, the end must come.'¹⁷ 'Ask nothing; want nothing in return. Give what you have to give; it will come back to you—but *do not think of that now*, it will come back multiplied a thousandfold—but *the attention must not be on that*.'¹⁸ [emphasis added]

An oft-quoted verse from the *Gita* underlines the above important fact: 'To work alone you have the right, not to the fruits. Don't let the fruit of action be your motive; don't be attached to inaction either.'¹⁹ Working without attachment to fruits is indeed difficult. So the alternative is inaction. Sri Krishna warns against this tendency. Work we must, looking upon it as worship, as Swamiji said. That implies that we take all possible care in the performance of work—never cutting corners, never holding back our efforts, never settling for the second best because striving for the best could mean personal discomfort—without thinking about the fruits of action.

Having done our part to the best of our ability, when we do not lay claim to the fruits of action, but offer them to God, success or failure will cease to affect us. It is this even-mindedness that is called yoga, according to the *Gita*: 'Being established in yoga, O Dhananjaya, perform your actions without attachment and remaining even-minded both in success and failure. This evenness is called yoga.'²⁰

The fever of disappointment results from an improper assessment of oneself. When a person feels that he has not got his due, that the organization has not used his talent properly, it is good to remember Swamiji's two golden pronouncements:

1. 'No power in the universe can withhold from anyone anything he really deserves.'²¹
2. '... man never examines himself. He thinks he is quite as fit to be on the throne as the king. Even if he is, he must first show that he has done the duty of his own position; and then higher duties will come to him. When we begin to work earnestly in the world, nature gives us blows right and left and soon enables us to find out our position. No man can long occupy satisfactorily a position for which he is not fit.'²²

* * *

To conclude. There are time-honoured

prescriptions to rid ourselves of work-associated fevers. A goal in life, a proper work philosophy, goal orientation and filling one's mind with noble thoughts—these are some of the means to cure us of these fevers and lead us to our well-being—*svāsthya*, which means abidance in the Atman. *

References

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2. *Gita*, 3.8.
3. CW, 1.115.
4. *Gita*, 3.30.
5. CW, 1.80.
6. *Gita*, 4.18.
7. Swami Nikhilananda, *The Bhagavad Gita* (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1944), 132.
8. CW, 3.193.
9. *ibid.*, 1.71.
10. Swami Chetanananda, *God Lived with Them* (St Louis: Vedanta Society of St Louis, 1997), 362.
11. Quoted in Swami Nikhilananda, *Holy Mother* (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1962), 237.
12. *ibid.*, 229.
13. *Gita* 18.46.
14. *ibid.*, 18.57.
15. *Anādīkālapravṛtta anantapāpasañcayena 'katham ahaṁ bhaviṣyāmi?' ityevambhūta anta-jaravīnirmuktaḥ 'paramapuruṣa eva karmabhūḥ ārādhitō bandhanāt mokṣayiṣyati' iti smaran sukhena karmayogameva kuruṣva ityarthah.* —Sri Ramanuja's commentary on the *Gita*, 3.30.)
16. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1985), 159.
17. CW, 2.1.
18. *ibid.*, 2.5.
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21. CW, 4.366.
22. *ibid.*, 1.66.



Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago



November 1902

DISCIPLESHIP

Development of character is indicated by its growing freedom from selfishness. The highest form of character is that from which the dross of self has been completely purged out. Religion which teaches the essential unity of all beings alone furnishes the *rationale* of this sort of character and helps its evolution more than anything else. Morality founded upon views other than religious does not believe in the complete giving up of the self. On the other hand, self is the cornerstone upon which it is based, for morality is encouraged by these schools only in so far as it is found to be a means of securing the greatest amount of happiness to all—including, of course, the selves of those who conceive and propound these physico-ethical views of morality. ...

A few words now about independence and self-reliance. We call a man independent who can do things according to his liking. But the character of this liking determines the moral nature of the independence a particular person enjoys. A man who is strong enough to satisfy his cravings for gold by plunder and can escape being arrested may be called independent in one sense but his liking being of a very low moral order—we do not call his independence right.

The disciple who places himself under the guidance of a Guru does so not under compulsion but out of his own free will. Anything done of one's own accord does not show any lack of self-reliance on the part of the doer. Moreover the *motive* which impels the disciple to choose a Guru, being of the very highest order—the realisation of the Infinite—the charge of want of self-independence cannot hold good in the case of the true disciple.

To have control over the senses, not to feel agitated by the gusts of passion, is the beginning of religion. But in order to fulfill itself it demands that the higher self-consciousness, which had to be carefully developed and strongly asserted in order to bring the animal nature under perfect control, should itself be destroyed. There comes a time in the life of an aspirant, when what we call the loftiest morals cannot satisfy him: when even the higher egoism—which was so very helpful in the beginning—seems to be a hindrance to perfect self-realisation. At this stage the *sadhak* feels as if he can see the Light but cannot touch it owing to the intervention of a thin transparent veil. This thin veil must be rent asunder. To effect this grandest achievement he must give up his self-will completely. But how should he begin? Should he give up his independence to anybody and everybody? No. Though a man who has risen to the high state of morality indicated above is in not much danger of falling off from the right path by being taken advantage of by men of sinister motives, yet he is not quite out of danger. So long as there is the least touch of egoism one cannot be quite safe. So he begins by giving up his will to one who has no self in him (for such is the true Guru) and who cannot therefore err and lead others to err. When by giving up his self the disciple becomes self-less, he sees his unity with all and loves all and serves all as his own dear self. He in his turn 'becomes like the spring bringing peace and blessings to all'. This is true wisdom—the revelation of the Vedas in the heart—the true self-reliance.

—A Sannyasin

‘You Will Be a Paramahansa!’

SWAMI SARVAGATANANDA

Part 3: Kalyan Maharaj’s Personality: More Glimpses

Swami Akhandanandaji Maharaj sent me to the best place for my monastic training. Nine years at Kankhal Sevashrama under Kalyan Maharaj’s care—simply indescribable! In every way the place was most congenial for a monastic aspirant. We were well protected, and our daily routine—work, worship, study, contemplation—was so set that everything went on smoothly. No other centre then resembled Kankhal. The uniqueness of Kankhal Sevashrama was that the monastery was absolutely secluded from hospital work. When we came out of the monastery we served in the hospital or taught schoolchildren in the evening. After the work, back at the monastery we were left absolutely to ourselves. In the Sevashrama there were only pilgrims and patients—no devotees. In every other centre monastics had to give time to devotees, to people. Ours was different. We did worship at the shrine at our convenience, service in the hospital being the Sevashrama’s main activity. No doubt we had our regular morning prayer, meditation and classes. We also celebrated Durga Puja, and the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swamiji, Brahmanandaji Maharaj and Mahapurush Maharaj. But none of these meant neglect of hospital work. Someone was always there to take care of that.

My Fear of the Dead Laid to Rest

Swami Kalyananandaji was a great inspiration to me in many ways. One night, when it was my turn to serve at the hospital, Kalyan Maharaj quietly walked in to see some patient. Naturally, I too joined him as he visited the wards. Finally we came to the mortuary. I was

terribly afraid of dead bodies. When we were children we were not allowed to approach a corpse. Even when I grew up, I had no occasion to go near one. To me the ordeal was worse than hell. Whenever dead bodies had to be carried from the Sevashrama, others did that. I was never asked to go; I don’t know why. So I had never visited the mortuary and had avoided it all those months. But that night Kalyan Maharaj was slowly approaching the mortuary, enquiring after a patient. I told him that the patient was no more and that his body was in that room. Since Maharaj went ahead I could not stay back. He opened the door, switched on the light and walked inside. I followed him. I was not afraid while with him. I was as bold as he! He went to the body, removed the shroud from the face, observed it, turned to me and said, ‘You see, people are afraid of corpses. If there is anything absolutely harmless in this world, it is a dead body. *Angul tulte parena, katha bolte parena*. It can’t raise a finger, can’t say a word, and yet people are afraid of it! *Abhaye bhay darshan*. People are afraid where there need be no fear.’ ‘Yes, Maharaj, it is true,’ I told him. After he heard this, he slowly walked away, washed his hands, and was ready to go out. But I had to draw the shroud back over the corpse’s face! I did it. I was not afraid at all. Then I washed my hands and both of us left the place.

Believe me, from then on I was never afraid of corpses. He just laid that fear to rest. Later on when the hospital had many cholera patients, we had to remove a number of bodies. Once we spent a whole night doing that. But my fear had completely disappeared. While in the mortuary Kalyan Maharaj had

not addressed me directly. He had only said, ‘People are afraid of dead bodies.’ I was instantly following every word he said. He meant it, and I took it well—that is all! He did not humiliate me, did not say, ‘Oh, you are a coward, a sissy!’ Nothing of that sort. His way of teaching was always like that. Moving with him you could learn many valuable lessons that you would cherish all through your life.

My Bitterness for Bitter Squash

Another instance: I did not like the taste of bitter squash. But when he encouraged me to eat it, how nicely he put it. He did not tell me, ‘You are too choosy. You must eat whatever is served.’ No. One day he prepared a dish in such a way that when I ate it I relished it. ‘Do you know what it is? It is bitter squash,’ he remarked. ‘But it is not bitter,’ I said. ‘Well, there is a way of preparing it,’ he replied. But as I ate it I gradually started feeling the bitter taste. ‘Now it tastes a little bitter,’ I said. ‘But it won’t hurt you anyway,’ he said. That was Kalyan Maharaj’s method of putting forth an idea in a most acceptable way. I love bitter squash now. You see? His way of doing things was very, very nice. Nothing drastic. Many ideas, even today I cannot forget them.

His Attitude towards Money

There were many mango trees in the Sevashrama which he himself had planted—125 of them. When they began bearing fruit a swami said, ‘We have so many thousands of mangoes. If we sell them we can get a lot of money.’ Kalyan Maharaj said, ‘Well, I didn’t raise these plants to make money. Eat what you can, and from the rest give two each to sadhus coming for *bhiksha*. Nischayananda and I worked hard so that people could enjoy these fruits. Poor people cannot afford good

mangoes. So distribute them.’ He never wanted to make money out of it. What a nice idea: for people’s sake, not for money! How hard he worked! Every year he would invite local monks and give them a feast of mangoes and rice pudding. They would all come and greatly relish the feast. In fact, they used to look forward to Kalyan Maharaj’s invitation for the feast. Only rice pudding and mangoes, nothing else. Well, Maharaj belonged to a generation of his own, not to be seen again.

As I said, I used to keep the accounts. A certain man had promised to contribute one rupee every month to the Sevashrama. For a few months he did not keep his promise. I used to see him at the marketplace. One day I said to Kalyan Maharaj, ‘I often meet that per-

Every year he would invite local monks and give them a feast of mangoes and rice pudding. They would all come and greatly relish the feast. In fact, they used to look forward to Kalyan Maharaj’s invitation for the feast. Only rice pudding and mangoes, nothing else.

son in the market. Should I remind him about the money?’ ‘Oh, do you? But did Akhandanandaji Maharaj tell you to collect money when you came here?’ I said no. ‘Did I tell you?’ I said no. ‘Then why do you worry about it? We shall manage with whatever comes. Today you want to make collections, increase funds and build more things. And what happens? The mind goes towards that and spiritual life vanishes. You have come here to lead a spiritual life. Struggle for that, lead the life; that is more important. Don’t worry about funds and buildings. Let people donate if they want; if they don’t, it doesn’t matter. You need not worry about it. If they forget, what can *you* do? You need not remind them. Don’t they know it? Leave it at that.’ He made it very clear not to make an issue of money. Needless to say, this left a deep impression on my mind.

Kalyan Maharaj used to say, 'The important thing is to do the work well. Whatever comes through Sri Ramakrishna's grace, let us use it, that's all. It is not the quantity, but the quality of work that is important. Even if you are able to help only one patient, that's enough. What's important is service. Do whatever is at hand, even though little. Otherwise the mind will go on making plans, wasting your whole life on that. Leave these things as they are.' That is why it took time for the Sevashrama to grow.

This is a very great ideal in spiritual life: we are here not to make money and erect

Just imagine: by giving a few rupees, Kalyan Maharaj had straightened that man. He had changed his entire mind, his whole pattern of behaviour. It impressed me very much.

buildings. We have come to lead a good spiritual life. We need this kind of direction; otherwise we will be lost. Kalyan Maharaj ensured that we remembered this in everything we did. And we always kept up that spiritual attitude towards life. Now the Sevashrama has to write to people because they are opening new departments. That is a different question. But Kalyan Maharaj had a very considered view on this. He cared little for money. Once somebody stole five hundred rupees and he said, 'Well, I think he needed that money.' He never worried about people stealing money.

How His Love Transformed Lives

Once a thief came to our garden to work, and the swami who was in charge of the garden said, 'You rascal! You stole something from such-and-such a place and now you come here asking for work? Get out!' I did not know that this had happened, and when I saw the man slowly going away, I asked him, 'What happened? You came here to work. I asked you to go to the garden.' 'That swami asked me to go away,' he replied. As we were

talking, Kalyan Maharaj came there and told the man to go and work in the garden. 'But that swami told me to leave,' he said. At this, Maharaj laughed and said, 'Well, the swami does not know that even though you did something wrong, you confessed to me about it. Come with me.' Maharaj took the man to the garden and explained to the garden swami, 'Look, he did something wrong, no doubt, but he is sorry for that.' Kalyan Maharaj forgave him. But the garden swami did not like the man to be excused and later said to me in the dining hall, 'Narayan, who knows what this fellow will do.' 'I would give everybody the benefit of the doubt,' I replied. 'Not only him; everybody.' 'Then what is to be done?' 'Either keep worrying about that doubt or give him a chance.' 'Well, I don't know,' said the garden swami. 'Neither do I,' I told

him, 'but Maharaj's ideal is superior to ours. We have to give the thief an opportunity when a man like Maharaj wants us to.'

One more incident comes to my mind. A man used to visit Kalyan Maharaj now and then and ask him for money. Having got some from Maharaj, he would just walk away. This happened a number of times. One day I asked, 'Who is he? He just comes to take money from you and walks away. He doesn't do anything. How is it?' Maharaj never answered my question. Sometime after Kalyan Maharaj passed away, this man came to the Sevashrama and asked for him. 'How much money do you want?' I asked him. He said, 'I don't want money, I want to know where Maharaj is.' Then I told him that Maharaj had passed away. The man collapsed there and cried like a baby. Then he said, 'You don't know what he did for me.' 'What did he do?' I asked. 'Well, it is a very big story. One day I was at the marketplace. I had no money and I stole something from a shop. They caught me and the police were giving me a good thrashing. Maharaj

was passing by in a horse carriage. He stopped the carriage and asked the police to stop beating me. “What is the matter?” he wanted to know. “This man stole these things,” they said. “How much do they cost?” asked Maharaj. He paid the money and told me, “In future, if you want money come to me. Don’t steal. You look like a decent man. Why do you steal?” I used to work hard but whenever I couldn’t earn enough money, I would come to Maharaj and he would give me some money. I stopped stealing afterwards. He was so nice to me. He never asked me a question; he simply gave.’ Just imagine: by giving a few rupees, Kalyan Maharaj had straightened that man. He had changed his entire mind, his whole pattern of behaviour. It impressed me very much. I told the man that I would like to give him some money, but he said no. He never accepted my offer.

Kalyan Maharaj was generous to a fault. There were all sorts of people at the Sevashrama. For example, there was a dumb man who did absolutely nothing. He would just sit quiet, eat, come back, sit quiet, eat ... And there was another who was mentally deranged and a bit violent too. All were fed, all were taken care of. We had, however, to be very careful in dealing with them. And there was a sadhu, a very great soul. He had a bullet wound in the chest; the bullet could not be removed. Somebody had to apply sandalwood oil on his head daily to relieve him of his terrible headaches. Kalyan Maharaj cared for all these people. None was ever turned out. They stayed there and received the best care we could provide. Referring to such people, Maharaj would tell us: ‘Can’t you give him a little food? Why do you throw him out? What will he do outside?’ Anybody seeking shelter at the Sevashrama was certain to find a place there.

Once an interesting thing happened.

Swami Madhavanandaji, the then General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Order, was in Kankhal. He noticed a brahmacharin going about and told Kalyan Maharaj, ‘Do you know that boy?’ ‘Yes, I know him.’ ‘He has been sent away from three of our centres. He is no good. He should not be kept here.’ Because he was the General Secretary Madhavanandaji could use his authority and say this. ‘Well,’ said Kalyan Maharaj, ‘the boy has told me his whole story. He confessed everything to me. He cried and said, “I will try to be good here. I will do whatever you say. I will be careful.” That is

‘Look here, Sri Ramakrishna came not to make gold out of gold. He takes base metal and turns it into gold. If we can convert such boys, well, that is the best thing we can do. ...’

why he is here.’ And with a raised voice he said, ‘Look here, Sri Ramakrishna came not to make gold out of gold. He takes base metal and turns it into gold. If we can convert such boys, well, that is the best thing we can do. You want only good boys? They are already good. But such boys as that brahmacharin need help.’ And, you know, that brahmacharin served Kalyan Maharaj and the Sevashrama very well. Earlier, he would lose his temper and throw things about. This had happened in three places. But at Kankhal he became very careful. Eventually he controlled his temper completely and turned a new leaf.

Motto: Unselfish, Loving Service

Some day in 1935 some of our brothers were chatting in the library. Someone remarked, ‘We have renounced everything and are happy under the loving guidance of Kalyan Maharaj.’ Kalyan Maharaj was passing that way. He entered the library and occupied a chair. We all stood up. Then he said, ‘Who says you have renounced everything? What have you renounced? Your father, mother, brothers, sisters, your home? Did you own

them in the first place? Renounce something that you own. What is that which you own? Your ego and selfishness. Renounce them. Swami Vivekananda said, “Renunciation and service.” Renounce your ego and selfishness and serve with love. That is true renunciation.’ Then Maharaj looked at me and said, ‘Narayan, write this down: “Unselfish, loving service is the motto of our Order.”’ He then left the room. We were all silent for some time.

Love for Patients

Once Kalyan Maharaj told us, ‘If you don’t love the patients, don’t go to the hospital; if you don’t love that work, don’t go there.’ After this, two of the brahmacharins didn’t attend to their work in the hospital for some time. I asked them what was the matter. ‘We don’t love the work.’ ‘Is that how you understood Maharaj?’ ‘Yes, we think that is what he meant.’ I told them, ‘Suppose you came there as a patient. What would you expect of us and what would you get from us? That we don’t love you and we don’t like this work? Then

Kalyan Maharaj had clearly told us, ‘Here is a shrine for your worship, meditation and prayer, and there is a hospital for you to serve—both are the same.’ Leaving this, why go for a walk? I never joined anybody in that walking business.

what will be your fate? We have to love the work because if *you* came as a patient, that is what you would expect. We all have to be patient, persevering. We have to love the patients. Why do they come here instead of going to the municipal hospital? We monks serve them, love them and care for them. And this Kalyan Maharaj has been doing all these thirty-seven years. Just see. It is a good occasion for us, while such people are still alive. We can learn from him.’ Then they understood. They felt it—the need of it.

Proper Attitude towards Service

Some monastics would say, ‘We will do only temple work and library work, not hospital work.’ They would avoid it because we had to do everything, including menial work like scrubbing the floors and cleaning the bed-pans. Some of them did not like it. ‘If you want to become real monks,’ Maharaj told them very plainly, ‘you must regard this as our work.’ We had no nurses or servants, except one sweeper. And the day she was sick we had to do her work too. He taught us that we must be prepared to do everything, and he was very careful to see that we did it properly. Not only that—he also did it. Once Maharaj went to see a certain patient when we were not around, and the situation was pretty bad. He cleaned the whole area; he didn’t call anybody. He spread fresh sheets on the bed. There was a water tub and he put the patient’s clothes in it to soak. Later he washed them and put them out to dry in the sun. When we came, we noticed all this and asked the patients who had done all the work. ‘We didn’t do anything,’ they said. Kalyan Maharaj himself had done everything.

Some of the monastics wanted only meditation and study. A brahmacharin told me, ‘I want to be a jnana yogi.’ ‘Very good,’ I said, ‘be a jnana yogi. Read Swamiji’s *Jnana Yoga*. And you must have preparation for that too. [For us] karma yoga is the best.’ And I told him, ‘Without fulfilling that you cannot be a jnana yogi.’ People have their arguments. They want to quote scriptures.

When I was in Kankhal I was witness to many people who came to serve, but they were soon to quit. Very few of them remained healthy after some service at the Sevashrama. Do you know why? It was hard work. I had noted some two hundred names of people who came to serve during my nine years of

stay. As Kalyan Maharaj did, I too would let people serve and would provide a place for them to stay for two or three days. And then they would go away. Only three became monks. Kankhal is a pilgrim spot where all sorts of people come. Some liked it and some did not. You cannot force anybody to stay back. Sometimes we did not even know when they left—they would just walk away, that is all. Kalyan Maharaj did not believe in rules and regulations. That is why he could not find anybody he could rely on. Everybody came of his own accord and left likewise—they did not care for what was going on at the Sevashrama.

The Evening Walks

Everybody would go out for an evening walk when there was so much to do at the hospital. I never went for a walk. I said, ‘Why should you go for a walk? It is only for people who are either lazy or old, not for young people, who must be working. Work itself is an exercise for us. Why do you have to go somewhere for a walk? This bad habit is not for us. Swamiji used to do exercises, that’s all.’ I used to say this to even Belur Math swamis who came to Kankhal on a pilgrimage. We could not afford to take a walk. Where was the time? The evening was for *arati* and hospital work. Kalyan Maharaj liked that attitude. He himself had no time to go for a walk. How could we leave him and go on pleasure trips? In Bengali they say *bedate jaoa* (to go for a walk). Not here, sir. Nischayanandaji never went for a walk; neither did Kalyan Maharaj. Both worked hard, and we want to go for a walk! In the eve-

ning people wanted to go and see the Ganga *arati*, Brahmakund, and so on. I never went out like that. Here in our shrine is Thakur; everything we need is there. Why should somebody want to leave that and go to the Ganga for *arati*? Then why have a shrine here? Kalyan Maharaj had clearly told us, ‘Here is a shrine for your worship, meditation and prayer, and there is a hospital for you to serve—both are the same.’ Leaving this, why go for a walk? I never joined anybody in that walking business.

Austere Conditions at the Sevashrama

One more thing. We had no breakfast for two years; we could not afford it. At twelve noon we had a little rice and soup for lunch and at night two rotis and some vegetable for supper. My weight was never more than 98 pounds (about 45 kg). It was constant during those nine years. Undoubtedly I was quite strong and healthy, but my weight never increased because of poor food. We did not touch hospital money for our food. If anybody gave some donation for the monks, that could be used; not hospital funds. We were trained to be careful like that. So people came and left. Two or three years after my arrival at Kankhal, a certain devotee came to stay with us. After seeing our predicament, he made a sizable endowment for the monks. It was only after that that we were able to invite monks who wanted to live with us. Otherwise our food was very poor. But Kalyan Maharaj did not care; he too suffered hardships like the rest of us.

(to be continued)

Guilt Treatment

Doctor to patient: ‘I’ve been treating you for guilt for the past ten years, and you are still feeling guilty about a trifle like that? You ought to feel ashamed of yourself!’

Education according to Vedanta

SWAMI PITAMBARANANDA

Part 2: The Process of Education (*continued*)

In the last part we saw the different aspects of the educational process: the necessity of a teacher, the role of concentration in education and different methodologies employed for different students. We shall now see some more instances of different methodologies.

According to the *Bhagavadgītā*

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavadgītā*: ‘Some realize the Self in themselves through meditation with the help of the mind, some by the yoga of analytical knowledge and some others by the yoga of action. And yet there are some who do not know It thus. They hear of It from others (teachers) and worship [take to heart what they have heard]. They too, who are devoted to hearing, certainly overcome death (by realizing the Self).’¹

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya explains the verse:

Meditation means contemplation on the Self after withdrawing the sense organs like ears from their objects like sound into the mind, and next withdrawing the mind into the indwelling conscious Self. Thus ... meditation is a constant and uninterrupted current of thought (and feeling) like an unbroken stream of flowing oil. Through that meditation some yogis realize the indwelling Consciousness (the Self) in the intellect with the help of the mind purified by meditation

As for the others, we can easily infer from the context that those who do not possess the capacity for exclusive meditation take to analytical thinking along with meditation; and those with a restless mind dedicate their actions to God to make their mind pure and one-pointed. Others may lack understanding, but use their faith to finally achieve the same concentration and meditation.

Let us now see one more instance of teaching methodology where practical sessions admirably supplement theory instructions.

Some More Examples

In the sixth chapter of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* we have already seen Śvetaketu’s father point out to him the inadequacy of the education he had received till then, because he had not realized That by knowing which what is unknown becomes known.² Now we continue with the narrative to see the method of instruction employed by his father.

Śvetaketu said, ‘Please, revered father, teach me that.’ ‘So be it, my dear,’ said he. (6.1.7)

‘My dear, in the beginning there was Existence alone, One only, without a second. With regard to that some say, “In the beginning there was non-existence alone, one only, without a second. From that non-existence existence was born.”’

Āruṇi said, ‘How indeed could, my dear, existence come out of non-existence? Surely, in the beginning all this was Existence, One only, without a second.

‘That (Existence) willed: “I shall become many. I shall be born.” That created fire. ... [Fire created] water. ... and [water created] food (6.2.1-4). That Deity willed: “Let me enter into these three cosmic elements—fire, water and food—by means of their living self and then develop names and forms.” (6.3.2)

‘When eaten, food becomes divided into three parts: the grossest ingredient turns into faeces; the medium constituent becomes flesh; and the subtlest becomes the mind.

‘When drunk, water [fluids] becomes divided into three parts. The grossest ingredient turns into urine; the medium constituent becomes blood; and the subtlest becomes the vital force.

‘When eaten, fire [in the form of oil, clarified butter, and so on] becomes divided into three parts: The grossest ingredient becomes bone; the medium constituent becomes marrow; and the subtlest becomes [the organ of] speech.’

[Śvetaketu said,] ‘Please explain it to me further, revered sir [with examples; a firm conviction hasn’t yet arisen in me].’ ‘So be it, my dear,’ he said (6.5.1-4). ‘My dear, when curd is churned, that which is its subtle part rises upward. That becomes [butter and then] clarified butter. Similarly, my dear, when food is eaten, that which is the subtle part rises upward, and becomes the mind.’ (6.6.1-2)

‘Hence, my dear, the mind is made up of food, the vital force of water, and speech of fire.’ [The idea is, ‘What I have said is logical.’]

[Śvetaketu thought, ‘But I still do not get an absolutely firm conviction that the mind is made of food alone. Therefore] He said, ‘Please explain to me further, revered sir.’ ‘Let it be so, my dear,’ he said. (6.6.5)

‘My dear, a man consists of sixteen parts. Don’t eat for fifteen days. Drink water as much as you like. The vital force is made up of water. It will not depart if you drink water.’

The boy did not eat for fifteen days. Then he approached his father (saying), ‘Sir what shall I say?’ He replied, ‘My dear, (recite) the *ṛk*, *yajus* and *sāma* mantras.’ ‘They do not at all flash in my mind, sir.’

To him he said, ‘Dear boy, just as a single ember of the size of a firefly, left over from a large burning big fire, cannot burn much more than that, even so, my dear, of your sixteen parts only one is left, with which you do not remember the Vedas. Now go and eat and you will understand me.’

Śvetaketu ate and then approached his father. Whatever he asked him, he answered them all. The father said to him, ‘My dear, a single ember of a great lighted fire may be made to blaze up again by adding straw to it. Similarly, of your sixteen parts one was left and that blazed up by the nourishment from food. With that you can now remember the Vedas. Hence, my dear, the mind consists of food, the vital force consists of water, and speech consists of fire.’ After that he understood what his father said, yes he understood it.’ (6.7.1-6)

Shall we call this ‘the example and experiment method’?

Several examples and experiments continue throughout this chapter of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*. Finally the father leads the son to the realization of the supreme Truth: ‘Thou art That. The individual in Reality is the same as the universal Absolute.’

And we find in the next chapter Sanatkumāra employing a different methodology to help his student Nārada—who is already a venerable sage—to make him realize his true nature, the infinite Reality, the One without a second.

Importance of Life with the Teacher

An important point to be noted in all these narratives is the student’s life with the teacher. About this vital component of education Swami Vivekananda said: ‘My idea of education is personal contact with the teacher—Gurugriha-vāsa [living in the abode of the teacher]. Without the personal life of the teacher, there would be no education.’³

And again, ‘One should live from his very boyhood with one whose character is like a blazing fire and should have before him a living example of the highest teaching. ... In our country the imparting of knowledge has always been through men of renunciation.’⁴

Need for Right Assimilation

Again, in the eighth chapter of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* we find:

Prajāpati (the Lord of the created beings) said, ‘The Self which is free from sin, free from old age, free from death, free from grief, free from hunger and thirst, whose desires come true, whose resolves come true—That has to be sought; one should desire to understand That. He who realizes that Atman attains all the worlds and all the desires.’⁵

Both the gods and the demons heard this and said: ‘Well, let us seek that Atman by knowing which one attains all the worlds and all the desires.’ Saying so, among the gods king Indra himself went to Prajāpati [leaving behind all other gods, all enjoyable things and garments]. Virocana, the king of the demons, too went to

Prajāpati. Each not knowing about the other's visit, both of them came to Prajāpati, faggots in hand. [8.7.2]

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya comments: 'They left behind all their royal paraphernalia and went to Prajāpati by themselves. This shows that the possession of Self-knowledge is more important than the rulership of the worlds. One should therefore approach the teacher with due humility.'

And the narrative continues: 'These two lived in celibacy (being engaged in service) for thirty-two years. To them Prajāpati said: 'Why have both of you been living here?' They said, 'A saying of yours is being repeated by people: "The Self which is free from sin, free from old age, free from death, free from grief, free from hunger and thirst, whose desires come true, whose resolves come true—That has to be sought; one should desire to understand That. He who realizes that Atman attains all worlds and all desires." Desiring to know that Atman we have lived here.' [8.7.3]

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya comments: 'Although before coming to Prajāpati the two were jealous of each other, yet on account of their eagerness to acquire knowledge they lived with Prajāpati practising celibacy and gave up such faults as attachment, aversion, delusion and jealousy. Thus is proclaimed the glory of Self-knowledge.'

The Upanishad continues: 'To them Prajāpati said: "The Person that is seen in the eye—that is the Self. This is immortal, fearless. This is Brahman" [8.7.4]. They went away satisfied in heart. [8.8.3]

Prajāpati saw them [going] and said: 'They are both going away without having known and without having realized the Self. And whoever of these, whether gods or demons, follow this doctrine shall perish. ' Virocana, satisfied in heart, went to the demons. To them he preached this doctrine: 'The self (body) alone is to be adored in this world. The self alone is to be served. It is only by adoring and serving the self that one attains both this world and that.' [8.8.4]

Therefore even today in this world they

speak of one who does not practise charity, who has no faith, and who does not perform sacrifices: 'Alas, he is verily a demon.' [8.8.5]

But even before reaching the gods Indra saw this difficulty: 'Just as when this body is well adorned, then this one (the reflection) also certainly is well adorned; when well dressed it becomes well dressed; when clean, this also becomes clean. In the same way, when the body becomes blind this becomes blind; when this has running eyes or nose it also has running eyes or nose; when this is crippled this also becomes crippled; in accordance with the destruction of the body, this also gets destroyed. I do not find any benefit in this [knowledge].' [8.9.1]

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya's comments: 'Being a god, Indra was endowed with spiritual qualities like non-cruelty. He reflected on Prajāpati's words again and again, and found certain difficulties in accepting the body as the Self. He wondered how, if the reflection cast by the body in water or in a mirror was the Self, it could be immutable, since it changes with changes in the body.' Hence

He came again to Prajāpati, faggots in hand. To him Prajāpati said, 'O Indra, you went away with Virocana, satisfied in heart. Now what brings you back? ' He said, 'O venerable sir, ... I do not find any good in this [knowledge].' [8.9.2]

He said, 'So it is, Indra. I shall explain the Self to you further. Live for another thirty-two years.' He lived with him another thirty-two years. To him [who had stayed thus and developed some inner purity] he said: [8.9.3]

'He who moves about, exalted, in dreams—this is the Self. This is immortal, fearless, this is Brahman.' Indra went away with a satisfied mind. Even before reaching the gods he found this difficulty: 'This [dream self] is not blind even if the body is blind, nor do its eyes or nose run when the eyes or nose of the body run; this self is not affected by the defects of the body. It is not killed when the body is killed, nor one-eyed when it is one-eyed. Yet they kill it, as it were; they chase it, as it were. It becomes conscious of pain, as it were; it weeps, as it were. I do not see any good in this [knowledge].' [8.10.1-2]

He returned again, faggots in hand, ... and told Prajāpati: 'O venerable sir, ... I do not see

any good in this.' He said, 'So it is, Indra. I shall explain this Self further to you.' ['Although twice I spoke to him logically, he has still not understood it properly. Therefore, as before, even now he has some cause of mental obstruction.' Thinking thus, Prajāpati said to him:] 'Live with me another thirty-two years.' He lived with Prajāpati another thirty-two years. To him [who had lived thus and had his defects attenuated] Prajāpati said: [8.10.3-4]

'When a man is asleep, with senses withdrawn and serene, and sees no dream—this is the Self. This is immortal, fearless. This is Brahman.' He went away satisfied in heart. Even before reaching the gods he found this defect: 'In truth, it [the self in deep sleep] does not know itself as 'I am it', nor does it know these [other] creatures. It has therefore reached annihilation, as it were. I do not see any good in this.' [8.11.1]

He came again, faggots in hand, and told Prajāpati: 'O venerable sir, ... I do not see any good in this.' He said, 'So it is, Indra. I shall explain the self further to you, and nothing else. [But there is only a little residual defect in you. To eliminate that] Live with me for another five years.' Indra did that. This amounted to a hundred and one years. ... To him Prajāpati said: [8.11.2-3]

'O Indra, this body is indeed mortal, held by death. But the body is the support of the immortal, bodiless Atman. Verily, the embodied self is held by pleasure and pain. Surely, there is no cessation of pleasure and pain for the embodied. But pleasure and pain do not touch one who is free from body consciousness.' [8.12.1]

'When the person in the eye resides [in the body], he resides where [the organ of] sight has entered into the space (pupil of the eye); the eye is the instrument of seeing. He who is aware of the thought: "Let me smell this"—he is the Self; the nose is the instrument of smelling. He who is aware of the thought: "Let me hear"—he is the Self; the ear is the instrument of hearing. He who is aware of the thought "Let me think this"—he is the Self; the mind is his divine eye. He, the Self, sees all these desires in the World of Brahman through the divine eye, the mind, and rejoices. The gods meditate on that Self. Therefore all worlds belong to them, and all desires. He who knows that Self and understands It obtains all worlds and all desires.' Thus said Prajā-

pati, yes, thus said Prajāpati. [8.12.4-6]

What a teacher!

Life with the Teacher: Another Illustration

There is a beautiful story in the *Praśna Upaniṣad*. 'Sukeśā, Satyakāma, Sauryāyaṇi, Kausalya, Bhārgava and Kabandhi—all these who were devoted to and intent on a search of the supreme Brahman, approached the venerable Pippalāda, faggots in hand, with the belief that he would tell them everything about Brahman.

To them the seer said '[Although you have already practised control of the senses, still] live (here) with me for a year more, practising austerity, chastity, faith [and service to your teacher]. Then you may ask questions as you please. If we know, we shall tell you all.'⁶

The Upanishad describes that after a year he fulfilled their desire for knowledge. The story ends thus: 'While worshipping him they said, "You indeed are our father (since you have given us a new birth by imparting the knowledge of Brahman that is eternal, ageless, deathless and fearless) who have taken us across ignorance to the other shore. Salutation to the supreme rishis! Salutation to the supreme rishis!" [6.8] Śrī Śaṅkarācārya calls these seers 'originators of the line of traditional transmission of the knowledge of Brahman'.

(to be continued)

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4. *ibid.*, 5.369.
5. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 8.7.1.
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Six Days in Mauritius

SWAMI SMARANANANDA

I nvited by the Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa, Durban, I was to reach there by 3 May 2002. I thought, why not I visit Mauritius on the way. The Ramakrishna Mission has been functioning there for more than 60 years. Thus I left for Mumbai on 25 April and took next morning's Air Mauritius flight. Before describing our work there, I think it will be a good idea to give some idea about this marvelously beautiful island and its history.

Mauritius—A Brief History

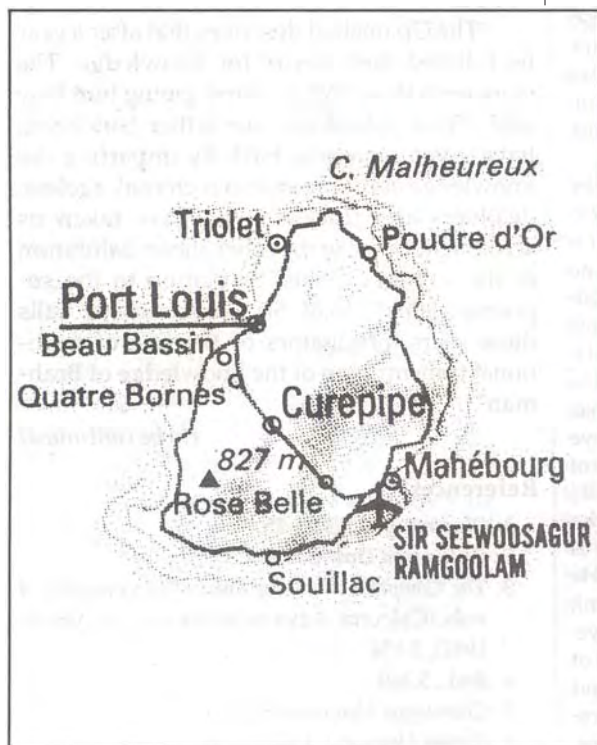
Mauritius is a small island of 2040 sq km, 65 km from north to south and 45 km from east

to west, nearly 800 km east of Madagascar near the east coast of Africa. Set like a jewel in the Indian Ocean, the island is famous for its beauty. The principal towns are Port Louis, the capital, Vacoas on the inland plateau, Curepipe and Phoenix.

Till the end of the sixteenth century this island lay uninhabited and undisturbed, covered by thick forests. Sailors from India and the Middle East to African shores made occasional brief halts in Mauritius.

The first people to settle in Mauritius were the Dutch. They took formal possession of the island in 1598 AD and called it Mauritius after Maurice Van Nassau, the ruler of their country. Though they planted some fruits and vegetables, it was not adequate even for the small population. The slaves from Madagascar hardly numbered 300. The Dutch killed more animals than necessary. A bird known in English as 'dodo' was roaming all over the island. But the Dutch settlers killed them in such great numbers that this species of bird became extinct, giving rise to the English expression 'as dead as a dodo'. The Dutch introduced sugarcane cultivation also, which plays an important role in the modern economy of Mauritius.

The Dutch left the island in 1710 and the French came in their place in 1721. They gave it the name 'Ile de France'. During the French rule there was all-round progress: agriculture, sugarcane cultivation, sugar industry, education, and so on flourished. By now both the French and the British had noticed the strategic importance of Mauritius, in their voyages to and from India.



Mauritius

So the British made many attempts to conquer the island from the French and finally succeeded in 1810 in annexing it to the British crown. Nevertheless, while signing the capitulation treaty the French made the British agree to keep the French language and culture. So French is in vogue in the island to this day. There are French newspapers, but none in English!

Demographically, the island underwent a sea change during the successive rules of the French and the British. The former brought African slaves to work on their farms. The British brought Indian labourers to work in the sugarcane fields and manage the sugar industry. Even today sugar forms the main export of the country.

Today the population of Mauritius is 1.2 million—Indo-Mauritian 68%, (Hindus 52%, Muslims 16%), European-African and mixed Euro-African 27%, and Chinese and others 5%. English, French and Creole (a mixed dialect of African, French and certain other languages) are spoken in Mauritius. In everyday life Creole is very much in use. Hindi was being preserved by the population of Bhojpuri (a Hindi dialect) descent, but now with so many languages to learn, the new generation has almost forgotten Hindi. Tamil and Telugu are also sparsely spoken.

Over the years, the slaves were freed and the indentured Indian workers were released. Mauritius finally became independent in 1968. In 1992 it became a republic severing its connection with the British crown.

Since independence the country has

made rapid strides in different fields, though there have been economic hiccups. Tourism and export of sugar, woolen knitwear and tea sustain the economy. The country is developing on the lines of advanced countries of the West, including their darker side like drug abuse.

Ramakrishna Mission in Mauritius

During the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first three decades of the twentieth, proselytizing of the Indo-Mauritian community—particularly the Tamils—by Christian missionaries was rampant. In order to check it, a committee of Tamil leaders was set up to study the problem and take corrective measures. Some influential Hindus were its members. This group established contact with John de Lingen Kilburn, a British protagonist of Hinduism. This gentleman called upon the Hindus not to give up their religion and asked the committee to get in touch with the Ramakrishna Mission and request them to send a swami to Mauritius. Already the Hindu community had heard about the Ramakrishna Mission and so they requested the Mission to send a swami to preach Hindu-



Ramakrishna Mission, Mauritius

ism. Thus it was in July 1939 the Mission sent Swami Ghanananda, a deep scholar and powerful speaker. On his arrival the Swami was given a hearty welcome by the Indo-Mauritian community of the island. His lectures were greatly appreciated, particularly by young men.

In due course Swami Ghanananda established contact with people of different parts of the island. This meant securing the Ramakrishna Mission's work on a permanent basis in Mauritius. The Swami conducted relief work for cyclone victims. All this enabled him to acquire properties in different parts of the island. With a handsome contribution from R G Desai & Co he bought the property at 15 Cantons, Vacoas, where the Mission's main centre is now located.

In 1946 Swami Ghanananda left for England to start the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre. But before he left Mauritius the Ramakrishna Mission's work had been permanently established in the island.

Swami Nihshreyasananda succeeded him in 1947 and continued the work started by his predecessor. An erudite scholar and accomplished speaker, he was highly respected by the people of Mauritius. His sense of hu-

mour and jovial interaction endeared him to devotees. However, he left for Africa in 1950 to continue his preaching work among the ethnic Indians there.

Swami Nihshreyasananda's was succeeded by Swami Kritananda, who also left in 1971. Till 1979 more swamis came and went. In August 1979 Swami Balaramananda, a scholarly monk, took charge of the work. Till his passing away in 1987, the work progressed in several directions.

The performance of Durga Puja, started by Swami Aparananda in 1977, continues to this day. A new temple of Sri Ramakrishna was dedicated by Swami Vireswaranandaji, the tenth President of the Ramakrishna Order, on 5 December 1976. Swami Gambhiranandaji, the eleventh President of the Order, installed a marble statue of Sri Ramakrishna in the temple in 1981.

Swami Krishnarupananda took charge as President of the Ramakrishna Mission in Mauritius in July 1987, and has been carrying on the work smoothly. The centre is quite popular among the local Hindus.

My Visit

As mentioned at the outset, I began my tour with a visit to Mauritius and arrived there from Mumbai by an Air Mauritius flight which left at 9:05 am on 26 April and reached there by 1:35 pm, Mauritian time. The flight took six hours, Mauritian time being one and a half hours behind Indian time.

Swami Krishnarupananda and Kishore Gujadhur, Secretary of the Management Board of the ashrama, received me



Ramakrishna Mission temple, Mauritius

at the airport. Ramakrishna Mission is a well-recognized organization in Mauritius. Thus there was no problem in immigration and customs clearance at the airport and very soon I was on my way to Vacoas, 22 km away, where our main centre is situated. The excellent road runs through picturesque sugarcane fields. Low hills with barren basalt rocks of various shapes came into view on the horizon. These are of volcanic origin, shaped by nature through millions of years.

As soon as I entered the ashrama there was a TV crew to interview me for *three* minutes (of course, it took a little more than that!) and record my visit. No doubt, it was not possible to tell them anything about Mauritius, as I had just landed there! The weather was cool and pleasant. It should be remembered that in the southern hemisphere this was the beginning of winter.

After the evening *arati* at the temple, I met a few devotees and we had some informal talk.

Next morning (27 April) began with a visit to the temple. The cool and crisp, pollution-free air was invigorating. The green lawns, flowers and trees at the ashrama made for a pleasant view. People said, 'Well, you are lucky. The weather is good now. Sometimes we get heavy rains and powerful storms.' Indeed, during my six days in Mauritius there was no heavy rain, only occasional drizzles.

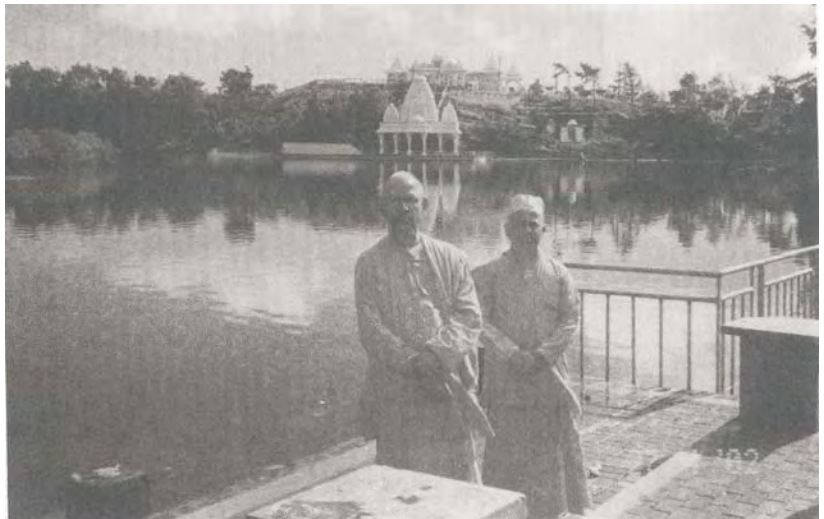
In the morning we left for Ganga Talao. The well-paved road lay through pine forests. Traffic was thin. It took about an hour to

reach the place. There was a huge lake on the way, which is the water source for the entire island.

Ganga Talao is a small lake in the midst of low hills. It is called so because someone brought Ganga water from India and poured it in the lake. There are temples, the main one dedicated to Mauritiuseswar! There are others dedicated to Ganesha, Gayatri, Kali, Lakshminarayan, and so on. Hanumanji stands on the top of a steep hill, maybe 1500 ft above mean sea level.

Returning to the ashrama, I had to present myself for a 30-minute TV interview on 'The Ramakrishna Mission: its ideals and activities in the modern context'. This recorded interview must have been telecast later; I had no way of seeing how the interview turned out.

In the evening we went for a satsang at Rajiv Gujadhur's house, next to Kishore's. They had put up a shamiana and chairs for the audience—maybe around 200 of them. Swami Krishnarupananda conducted a *nama sankirtan*, group singing of bhajans. I spoke for 40 minutes. We had dinner at Rajiv's. So had all the people who had assembled.



With Swami Krishnarupananda (right) at Ganga Talao

The next day, a Sunday, was a retreat day at the ashrama. Some lady devotees came in the morning and took care of cooking for nearly 300 participants. All were to have prasad at noon. It was a nice gathering of devotees. They had *bhajan* *ananda*, joy resulting from devotional songs and thinking of God.

In the afternoon we went for a short outing to Port Louis. Even here there is the problem of peak-hour traffic jams! Offices close here by 4 pm and so downtown traffic was in the opposite direction.

In the evening we went to the village of St Julien d'Hotman. Here our centre runs a primary school. Late in the evening some 100 devotees had gathered. After some bhajan and a talk, we returned to the ashrama for dinner and rest.

Next morning Swami Krishnarupananda took me to meet the President of Mauritius, Mr Karl Hoffman. He is a Catholic. Over a cup of tea we talked about the youth in general. He was quite worried about the alarming problem of drug abuse among them. He felt that parents have an important role to play in combating the problem and said that the children deserved more attention from them. Indeed,

civilization and affluence bring in their train the curses of modern life. From the President's palace we went to see a shopping plaza. This is similar to the shopping malls in the USA and other advanced countries. No scarcity of parking space here! You may say that it is a bit of USA transplanted. From there we went to see a volcanic crater, near the town of Curepipe. This is a tourist spot.

Again, in the afternoon, we went to Grand Bay, another popular tourist rendezvous, and from there to the Botanical Gardens at Pamplemousses. Though not very big, it is a nicely kept botanical garden. Here we could see huge Brazilian lilies, whose leaves are the size of big plates! After that we went to the Long Mountain area where a retreat was held at the Swami Vivekananda Pre-primary School. More than 100 people were present. Sarada Hoolash, a devotee, is managing this school. After dinner we returned to the ashrama by 10:15 pm.

Next day, 30 April, dawned with a light rain and stormy weather, perhaps to acquaint me with the terrible side of Mauritius! Tourists who go into ecstasy about the island have certainly not experienced its vagaries of weather.

At 8:30 in the morning we visited Indira Gandhi Higher Secondary School, financed by the government. This is only for boys, but it has a lady principal, an ethnic Indian. I addressed the boys for about 25 minutes on 'Education for Life and Living'.

From the school we went to the southern side of the island, to Blue Bay, another beautiful spot. We returned to the ashrama



With the President of Mauritius

by 12:15 pm. In the afternoon, before the evening *arati*, I spoke to the assembled devotees for about 30 minutes. This was a sort of 'leave taking', for the next day I was to leave for South Africa.

On 1 May there was sufficient time in the morning to visit the highest point in Mauritius—2760 ft above sea level—and the Black River gorge, including a waterfall. The scenery is captivating with a string of hills and rocks of weird shapes and the valley in front, surrounded by quiet forests. 1 May being a holiday, picnickers were out on the road. Many went into the forest to collect wild guava fruit, which ripen during this season. There were busloads of men, women and chil-



At the Botanical Gardens, Pamplemousses

dren. I heard they prepare jelly out of these fruit.

At noon, some 25 to 30 close devotees came to the ashrama. Swami Krishnarup-ananda had asked them to bring their own lunch. They could bid farewell to the visiting swami at

2:30 pm, for not more than two persons are allowed into the airport's VIP enclosure, where we had our tea. At 4:20 pm the plane took off for Johannesburg, South Africa's biggest city. It was a four-and-a-half- hour flight. About that later. *

Note

1. An unaffiliated centre.

Why Worry?

There are only two things to worry about:

Either you are well or you are sick.

If you are well, then there is nothing to worry about.

But if you are sick there are only two things to worry about:

Whether you will get well or whether you will die.

If you get well there is nothing to worry about.

But if you die there are only two things to worry about:

Whether you go to heaven or to hell.

If you go to heaven there is nothing to worry about.

And if you go to hell you'll be so busy shaking hands with old friends,
you won't have time to worry.

So why worry?

The Vedic Concept of God in All Its Aspects

SWAMI MUKHYANANDA

(continued from the previous issue)

Various questions that assail the mind of the Vedic investigator are deliberately discussed, analysed, and their solutions sought in the later Vedic literature—the Upanishads, which are called the Vedānta or the last portions of the corpus of Vedic literature. The thought-process of the Vedas as knowledge (from *vid*, ‘to know’) also reaches its culmination (*anta*) in the Upanishads. From this point of view also the Upanishads are called the Vedānta.

Experiencer the Central Core

What is the relationship between the One and the many? Where do both these aspects, the noumenal and the phenomenal, converge? What is their relationship with the investigator? Is not the experiencer the central core in all these problems? The ultimate Reality, God in His personal or impersonal aspects, all gods and nature itself—all these have a subject-object relationship with the experiencer. All conceptions of Reality are *his*. Without the experiencer, all talk about their existence becomes absurd; all problems become meaningless. For even to affirm, negate, doubt or characterize their existence, the experiencer is necessary. Then what is the nature of the experiencer? Is it that the secret of Reality, God and nature somehow lies hidden in the experiencer himself as his inmost and intimate essence? What is the nature of the experiencer, our inmost Self?

The Relationship between the One and the Many

The search for the Unity of all existence or Reality (Brahman) and Its realization in the

Self (Atman, the locus of all experience) predominate the Upanishads. Without the unity with the Self, the experiencing subject, Brahman merely remains an object, an incomplete objective infinite; and without the unity with Brahman, the Self is reduced to a point of mere individual subjective consciousness. It is soon realized that the subject and the object are the two poles of one and the same Reality. The external search for the absolute and infinite Brahman—which mind and speech fail to comprehend—culminates in Its discovery as the omnipresent Self of all existence, hidden in all things and beings, inspiring their functioning and that of the universe. Instead of being merely a remote inference and an object of logical thought-process, Brahman is intimately experienced as one’s innermost Self (*antar-ātman*).¹ Says the *Shvetāshvatara Upanishad*: ‘The one supreme divine Being, the attributeless Absolute, is hidden in all beings [as their inmost Self]. He is the all-pervasive, indwelling Self within all [and energizes the whole universe and inspires and guides its functioning], the witness of all their activities, and the Reality beyond the three *guṇas*.’²

The sage Śāṇḍilya expresses his realization of the Self thus: ‘This is my Self within the heart, smaller than a grain of rice, than a grain of barley, than a mustard seed, than a grain of millet, or than the kernel of a grain of millet; this Self within my heart is greater than the earth, greater than the mid-region, greater than heaven, greater than all the worlds. This is Brahman.’³ The *Kaṭha Upanishad* declares: ‘This Self hidden in the heart of all beings is smaller than the smallest particle and greater than the greatest entity.’⁴ We find the same

idea echoed in the *Shvetāshvatara Upanishad*: 'Subtler than the subtlest, the Creator abides in the minutest germ, manifests this whole variegated universe and also enfolds it within Himself. ...'⁵

The Great Equation

The great equation 'Atman = Brahman' and vice versa, is discovered and declared in the *mahā-vākyas* (great utterances) in the Upanishads. The *Māṇḍūkya Upanishad* declares: This Self is Brahman.⁶ The *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* points out that one can experience one's Self to be Brahman,⁷ like the sages Shāṇḍilya and Vāmadeva. But this 'I' is not the ego in me as the corporeal individual, but the Essence that is in me, you, and all other beings and things as their substratum. 'Thou art That Reality', assures the *Chhāndogya Upanishad*.⁸ The *Īsha Upanishad* and the *Bhagavadgītā* point out that it is not mere solipsism or subjective visualization of all beings and the universe in oneself.⁹ On the contrary, it is a direct realization of one's Self in all beings,¹⁰ thus reinforcing each other and removing any mutual shortcomings. It is a direct awareness (*aparoksha anubhūti*) of the unity of all existence. Brahman is pure universal Consciousness within all,¹¹ according to the *Aitareya Upanishad*. The source of all existence and experience, that Consciousness enables everyone to reveal (*bhā*) himself.

Brahman and the Universe

According to the *Taittirīya Upanishad*, Brahman is of the nature of absolute Existence-Consciousness-Infinity.¹² It is the basis of all relative existence, knowledge and boundless manifestation on the phenomenal plane. But from the absolute Infinite the rela-

tively infinite universe has emerged without infringing the character of the infinite Brahman in the least, as affirmed in the invocatory verse of the *Īsha Upanishad*: *Pūrṇam-adah, pūrṇam-idam, pūrṇāt pūrṇam udachyate; Pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya, pūrṇam-eva avashishyate*. And as this universe has for its substratum Truth (*satya*—*sat* stands for Truth as well as existence, for Truth alone exists), it is phenomenally and rationally apprehended by the mind as an evolutionary process. The unmanifest, subtle *avyakta* projects grosser

These are not really mutually exclusive conceptions, but are only indicative of man's psychic journey from the external to the internal until its culmination in the realization of the Atman, the supreme Reality, as the inmost core of his personality. These are different stages of psychic evolution and not external independent realities.

manifestations¹³ by stages guided by the cosmic Law and Order (*rita*). But it is not a straight-line evolution, but a cyclic process¹⁴ of evolution and involution, like the cycle of the seed and the tree. In the process, more and more of the hidden Truth is manifested. There is no hiatus or disjunction anywhere in existence. It is the appearance of the continuous, unbroken (*akhaṇḍa*) Existence as different things at different levels, from the subtlest to the grossest, one leading to another (compare: H₂O and its various forms such as water, ice, vapour, frost, dew and fog). As the *Kaṭha Upanishad* describes,

The elements are subtler [superior and more pervasive] than the senses [for the senses along with their objects are evolved from these subtle elements], the mind is subtler than the elements, the intellect (*buddhi*) is subtler than the mind, the cosmic Ego (Mahān Atman) is subtler

than intelligence, and the Unmanifest (*avyakta*) (creative Power of the supreme Being, Purusha), is subtler than the cosmic Ego, and Purusha is subtler and more pervasive than the Unmanifest, *avyakta*; there is nothing higher that transcends the Purusha, the Infinite. That is the culmination and that is the supreme Goal.¹⁵

On the macrocosmic scale, the Ego is represented by Hiranyagarbha, and the Unmanifest by the inscrutable primal energy-matter, *prakriti* or *maya*, the great creative Power of Purusha as *Īshvara*, which is highly wonderful and indescribable (*mahā-adbhutā anirvachanīya-rūpā*). There is an interesting parallel in the *Bhāgavata*: 'Receiving energy from Thee (the infinite Brahman), the Purusha (*Īshvara*)

Hanuman, the great devotee of God in His incarnation as Shri Rama, says to Him: 'O Lord, when I look upon myself as the body, you are the Master and I am Your servant; when I think of myself as a soul, I am a part of Yourself; when I realize that I am the Self, verily I am You, this is my conviction.'

of infallible power, along with *maya* (*avyakta*), holds within Himself the Mahat (Hiranyagarbha or cosmic Ego), signifying, as it were, the embryonic state of the universe. Backed by the same *maya*, this Mahat projected from within itself the golden sphere of the universe provided with outer coverings (that is, enclosed in different layers of cosmic existence of varying subtlety).¹⁶

The Atman Is to Be Realized

Because everything of the manifested universe is Brahman,¹⁷ by knowing That—the Self or Brahman—everything of this (phenomenal universe) becomes known;¹⁸ Therefore the Atman is to be sought after, is to be enquired into and realized,¹⁹ 'O, dear one, the

Atman is to be seen'²⁰—'the Atman, which is the direct and immediate Brahman, the innermost core of one's being.'²¹ Then knowing his true infinite immortal nature, man rises above all sorrow, all delusion, all fear (*shoka, moha, bhaya*) and remains in his blissful nature.²²

Interrelationship of Man, God and the Universe

Though from the noumenal (*pāramārthika*) point of view everything is Brahman alone and there is nothing other than Brahman,²³ from the phenomenal point of view we need to examine the mutual interrelationship of living beings (*jīvas*), the universe (*jagat*) and God as the Lord of the universe (Brahman as *Īshvara*). What must be the attitude of man towards these and how should he conduct himself? These questions also occupy the mind of the Upanishadic rishis. On the basis of their insights, great thinkers built up systems of philosophy, all of which come under the name Vedānta. As already explained, in these systems all the three aspects of God as extra-cosmic (Dvaita), intra-cosmic (Vishishṭa-advaita), and supra-cosmic (Advaita) are propounded and paths of realization delineated.

These are not really mutually exclusive conceptions, but are only indicative of man's psychic journey from the external to the internal until its culmination in the realization of the Atman, the supreme Reality, as the inmost core of his personality. These are different stages of psychic evolution and not external independent realities. The internal psychic states are projected externally as seen in a mirror or as in dreams where the ego projects its own universe which, though internal, appears to be outside of oneself, says Āchārya Shankara in his *Dakṣiṇāmūrti Stotra*.²⁴ Similarly,

though we apprehend this projection of the universe empirically as an evolutionary process within an externalized space and time with a causal relationship, we need to remember that space, time and causality themselves are the products of maya, the principle of relativity and divine Power that makes the Absolute appear as relative.²⁵

Man's personality is a viewing point, and his conception of the external world depends on how he views himself. When the locus of his personality is in the body (*deha*), he finds there is a corresponding concrete external universe of which his body is a part, and there is a Lord of the universe with a divine form and attributes, separate from the universe and its beings, which are dependent on His will. This is Dvaita, dualism.

When the locus of his personality is in the living soul within the body (*jīvātman*), he sees the universe animated by a Soul. That Soul is God, whose body is the universe and its living beings. The souls of all beings are parts of God, who is the universal Soul (*paramātman*), the Soul of souls. He controls the universe and the souls from within as the *antaryāmin* or *sūtrātman*, just as the individual soul controls the body from within. This is Vishishṭa-advaita, qualified non-dualism.

Finally, when the locus of man's personality is in the Self, the Atman, transcending the body and soul, the universe and God are transcended in Brahman, which is the inmost Self or the Atman in all. The bodies, which are parts of the universe, and the souls, which are parts of God, are seen merely as the manifested glory of the one Self or Brahman, the sole Reality, the sole infinite spiritual Existence. This is Advaita, non-dualism.

Hanumān, the great devotee of God in

His incarnation as Shri Rāma, says to Him: 'O Lord, when I look upon myself as the body, you are the Master and I am Your servant; when I think of myself as a soul, I am a part of You; when I realize that I am the Self, verily I am You, this is my conviction.'²⁶

These three main conceptions of Dvaita, Vishishṭa-advaita and Advaita are interspersed with several shades and grades of views according to man's psychic or emotional necessities; but all those views are comprehended by one of these three main concepts.

God in Popular Religion

Apart from these philosophic and quasi-philosophic conceptions, there are popular versions of these conceptions in the Itihāsas and Purāṇas, which Hinduism accepts as a secondary authority to meet the devotional needs and practical spiritual life of people at different stages of mental growth, understanding and capacities. These Itihāsas and Purāṇas render abstract philosophic concep-

Electrical energy is neither a fan nor a light bulb nor a motor, but works through different machinery and manifests its power differently. So the divine Spirit animating all these forms may be conceived or addressed in any suitable way. That is how God is addressed as our Mother, Father, Friend, and so on.

tions of Truth into picturesque and poetic, living deities with divine and philosophic attributes for the sake of worship and meditation in people's daily life. They have given inexhaustible inspiration to art, architecture and sculpture; music and song; poetry and literature, innumerable hymns and joyful rituals and festivals, and have permeated people's lives through and through. In one word, they render philosophy into living religion.

According to the *Kulārṇava Tantra*, 'Those people of weak intellect who are not able to realize the absolute, attributeless Brahman are helped to think of It through improvised forms with attributes.'²⁷ The *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* has this to say with regard to Kālī: 'To facilitate concentration of mind, to help in subtle meditation and to hasten the fulfilment of aspirations, the supremely glorious formless Kālī, the Mother of Time,²⁸ is invested with forms consistent with Her attributes and functions.'²⁹

The Evolution of the Concept of Deities

Brahman in relation to the universe is Īshvara, the Lord, with the threefold functions of creation, sustenance and dissolution or re-absorption of the universe. In relation to these three functions, He is a Trinity (Trimūrti). These threefold aspects are personified into three separate deities: Brahmā (Projector), Viṣṇu (Protector) and Shiva (Dissolver). They carry out the functions of *sṛiṣṭi* (projection), *sthiti* (protection/maintenance) and *laya* (dissolution). At the next stage, they are conceived as male deities, and the powers (*śaktis*)

supreme Reality. The female counterparts are also similarly sublimated to the power of Brahman, like *maya* and *prakṛiti*. Thus to the followers of Shiva, Viṣṇu, Gaṇapati, Sūrya, Kumāra, and other deities, the respective deities cease to be mere subsidiary gods, but represent God (Īshvara) Himself, performing all the threefold functions. Ultimately, in their true nature they are thought of as, and identified with, the supreme absolute Brahman itself.

Similarly, those who conceive the supreme God as female (Devī), as Mother instead of as Father of the universe, identify the Devī with the conception of Īshvara and attribute to Her the threefold functions of the Divine,³⁰ just as the followers of Brahmā, Shiva, Viṣṇu and other gods do in the case of their deities. The Devī is then thought of as the *maya* Power of Brahman (Mahā-māyā, Shakti), and is ultimately identified with the absolute Brahman (Brahma-mayī), based on the principle that Shakti and Shaktimat (possessor of Shakti) are non-different, being inseparable. In the Tāntric literature, Shiva (not one of the Trinity) stands for absolute Brahman, and Devī is Īshvari, His Shakti responsible

for creation, in place of Īshvara. Shiva is Mahā-kāla (the great potential Time or Eternity), and Shakti is Mahā-kālī (the great kinetic Time, who dances forth the

A person can be helpful to others, but should not violently force his ideas and methods on them.

What is important in food is nutrition and not the names and forms of various dishes.

through which they function are personified into their female counterparts or spouses. Gradually, from philosophic conceptions they descend to be popular deities or gods with their own families and retinue (subsidiary powers). Then again the curve takes an upward turn and by a process of synthesis, abstraction and refinement each god is raised to the philosophic conception of Īshvara or the supreme Lord performing all the three functions of projection, protection, and dissolution of the universe. Then He is identified as the manifestation of the impersonal Brahman, the

universe on the bosom of Shiva, the still Eternity). Shiva and Shakti are non-different like light and its brilliance. Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Shiva—the Trinity—are looked upon as Her three forms. Devī is also conceived in many popular forms with different names and attributes such as Durgā, Lalitā, Meenākṣhi, Chāṇḍī, Kālī and Pārvatī.

God and His Shakti are often thought of together with prominence to Shakti as in Umā-Maheshvara, Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, Sītā-Rāma, Rādhā-Krishṇa, Umā-pati, Sītā-pati and Lakṣmī-pati. Shiva and Shakti are also

thought of in the combined half-Shiva (male) and half-Shakti (female) form as the famous Ardha-nārī-īshvara. The Trinity of Brahmā, Vishṇu and Shiva are also fused into a single popular form of Dattātreya with three heads and six hands. The deities are also thought of together in combined names such as Rāma-Krishṇa, Shiva-Rāma-Krishṇa, Shiva-Rāma, Rāma-Gopāla and Rāma-Īshvara (Rāmeshvara). This process was current in Vedic times also.³¹

Meditation on Deities

As already discussed, the Reality is beyond names, forms and genders, but can be conceived in any manner to facilitate meditation. The *Shvetāshvatara Upanishad* declares: 'This supreme One is neither woman nor man, nor is This neuter. It is connected with the particular body in which It dwells and is described as such.'³² So the Divine can be described in all ways for It manifests in myriads of ways: 'Thou art woman, Thou art man, Thou art boy and the girl too; Thou art the old man tottering with a stick, Thou art manifest everywhere in myriads of forms.'³³

All subtle things share this characteristic as we see in empirical experience too. The life principle itself is neither male nor female, but works through male and female physical bodies and in asexual plants and micro-organisms. Similarly, electrical energy is neither a fan nor a light bulb nor a motor, but works through different machinery and manifests its power differently. So the divine Spirit animating all these forms may be conceived or addressed in any suitable way. That is how God is addressed as our Mother, Father, Friend, and so on. The Divine Mother also is similarly conceived as male or female and beyond both: 'Think of the Divine Mother as of male or fe-

male form; or meditate on Her as the formless Reality with the attributes of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.'³⁴

Since God is all-pervading, He can also be contemplated in non-human forms of animals, plants or images (*pratimā*) with or without form. Different images and figures made of gold are nothing but gold. Similarly, all forms of God are nothing but God. He may also be meditated upon in objects like the sun, the sky and time, which reflect some of His characteristics (*pratika*) such as all-pervasiveness, detachment, equality for all, removal of darkness (of ignorance) and the source of life and activity. He can also be meditated upon as word symbols (Logos) like Om, knowing full well that the supreme Reality is beyond words and thought (*avāk-manasa-gocharam*). In fact,

***Though like currency bills they may be
apparently imaginary and artificial, they have
an empirical value. Again, though an aeroplane
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taking people to the destination. A simple
ladder helps us ascend to a higher level.***

there is no symbol that can really represent It.³⁵

What is important is divine communion and a rapport with the divine Reality, and not the form in which It is conceived, worshipped or meditated upon as a help.³⁶ Thus a man may have very high intellectual conceptions of God and yet be of demoniac nature, and there may be another very saintly by worship with inner fervour of God through a stone image. As Swami Vivekananda pointed out, 'Religion is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man.'³⁷ Divine qualities are to manifest from within; they are not to be filled in from outside. The outside is only a help in this process. It is the lack of understanding of this psychological law that lies at the root of so much confusion and conflict in the field of

worship of God through different methods. A person can be helpful to others, but should not violently force his ideas and methods on them. What is important in food is nutrition and not the names and forms of various dishes. The Reality is thought of differently because of different tastes, temperaments and stages of development of persons; but the object of love and worship is the same all-pervading divine Reality. As the *Shiva-mahimna Stotra* puts it, 'O Lord, due to variations in tastes, people think

It may be mentioned in passing that the 'scientific' view of things, which itself has been changing from time to time, is also just one of the standpoints valid in its own particular field. Neither is it the only view of phenomena possible, nor is it coterminous with Reality.

of You in different forms and names and follow different paths, whether straight or meandering; but, ultimately, Thou art the only goal of all people, just as the ocean is the one goal of all rivers.³⁸ The Hindu hymnal literature is full of such universal sentiments. To quote another from *Shri Hari-sharaṇāśṭakam*, 'Some describe Shiva as the goal of meditation; some say it is Shakti (the Divine Mother); some say it is Gaṇesha; some say, verily, it is Sūrya. But, O Lord, everywhere in all these forms Thou alone art shining.'³⁹

The Nature and Significance of Deities

These different deities with their myriads of forms, statues, families and retinue serve, so to say, as containers and purveyors of the Sat-Chit-Ānanda Brahman (infinite Existence-Consciousness-Bliss); they serve as objects of worship and adoration to bring the Sat-Chit-Ānanda Brahman within the reach of all, according to their own inclinations, temperaments and capacities. They intimately live,

move and have their being among people and give them the needed emotional and psychological satisfaction.

Though God can be conceived and worshipped in any form, certain forms have become convenient and useful and avoid confusion in social life. They have been visualized and adopted by saints and sages and have been handed down to us by tradition. They are often conceived symbolically with divine attributes and philosophical principles and are of great help in meditation.

In some respects these conceptions may be compared to popular descriptions of abstract science in concrete terms. Or they could be thought of as similar to working models to facilitate easy comprehension and appreciation of subtle phenomena, like models of atomic structure or of the

DNA molecule. However, one should not imagine that the conceptions of God or gods are only imaginary and have no phenomenal existence. Though like currency bills they may be apparently imaginary and artificial, they have an empirical value. Again, though an aeroplane is an artificial thing, it serves the purpose of taking people to the destination. A simple ladder helps us ascend to a higher level. The Reality behind the conceptions of God is like the gold that supports the paper currency. The ultimate Reality is not insentient or material, but of the nature of universal Consciousness operating in all beings. It abides as the Self in all beings and insentient things. It responds to devotees by appearing in the very forms in which It is conceived and approached. It is this same Reality that is apprehended by our minds in several ways on the phenomenal plane through deities receiving our worship.

Again, to illustrate from modern science: Our views of matter have changed, reducing it

to subtle energy-particles. Still that does not preclude its manifestation as atoms, molecules, elements, compounds and various articles of daily use. Further, our ideas of many of the laws governing energy, material bodies, time and space have changed. But the old conceptions are also true to a certain extent and serve the purpose as far as they go. Each view has its own validity and unique purpose in its limited field of operation (*sva-kāle satyavat bhūti*). Similar is the case on the spiritual plane.

It may be mentioned in passing that the 'scientific' view of things, which itself has been changing from time to time, is also just one of the standpoints valid in its own particular field. Neither is it the only view of phenomena possible, nor is it coterminous with Reality. The *Bhāgavata* says: 'That from which a thing originates, into which it dissolves, and in which it abides in the intermediate stage—that alone is Real. The modifications have a mere phenomenal existence. ... A state from which another state originates and into which it is dissolved, is also relatively called real.'⁴⁰ 'We accept as true the causal order and enumeration of the categories upheld by the different exponents, just as they put it; for they are all equally reasonable from different points of view.'⁴¹

God Listens to His Creation

It should always be kept in view that the Reality is not only impersonal absolute Brahman, but, as far as Creation is concerned, It is also the personal Īshvara under whose guidance the whole universe consisting of the living and the non-living evolves.⁴² Īshvara listens to His creation, for He says: 'I am the Father of this world, the Mother, the Sustainer, and the Grandfather (impersonal Reality); the Purifier, the one thing to be known, the Om

(the Word), and the Scriptures.' [He is also] 'the Goal, the Support, the Lord, the Witness, the Abode, the Refuge, the Friend, the Place of origin and merging, the Storehouse (of all power), and the Seed Immutable (of the universe).'⁴³

In the *Gītā* the Lord further assures devotees that He accepts and grants their prayers in the very form in which they worship Him,⁴⁴ and also favours them in the way they approach Him.⁴⁵ He is the essence that runs through all forms in the universe, like the thread in a necklace of beads.⁴⁶ The *Bhāgavata* also emphasizes this truth.⁴⁷ The *Gītā* is the great charter of spiritual liberty, freedom of worship and equality and fraternity before the Lord. He is close to His creation and resides in

In the Gita the Lord has declared that He appears to devotees in the form in which they worship Him, for He infills and permeates the forms conceived by their minds, though He Himself is without form, just as the formless water when poured into containers of different shapes assumes their forms.

the heart of all beings.⁴⁸ He is easily pleased and is easily approachable by all who want Him alone,⁴⁹ the greatest sinner not excluded.⁵⁰ The Lord is our very own, our very Self.⁵¹

In the *Gītā* the Lord has declared that He appears to devotees in the form in which they worship Him, for He infills and permeates the forms conceived by their minds, though He Himself is without form, just as the formless water when poured into containers of different shapes assumes their forms. Not only that; He Himself assumes special forms of His own accord and lives among men from time to time when there is need,⁵² like water freezing into icebergs and assuming shapes and forms in the formless ocean. Thus though there are ap-

parent forms, the content of all the containers is the same water, the same infinite Sat-Chit-Ānanda Brahman.

Brahman, the supreme Reality, is infinite and indivisible and is of the nature of absolute Sat-Chit-Ānanda. Time and space and all other phenomena are derived from It, through its creative divine Power, *prakṛiti* or *maya*. 'The projection of the universe in its varied forms goes on for the experience of the soul through an unbroken succession of causes and effects until the term of its continuance ceases, according to the will of the Lord.'⁵³ The whole of manifestation—God, gods, universe and all the living beings—is permeated through and through with Brahman, which abides as the Self (Ātman) of all. This realization and living in that light is the highest worship (*parā pūjā*).

Notes and References

1. *Yat sākshāt aparokṣhāt brahma, ya ātmā sarvāntaraḥ*. —*Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, 3.4.1.
2. *Eko devaḥ sarvabhūteshu gūḍhaḥ sarvaavyāpi sarvabhūta-antarātmā; Karmādhyakṣaḥ sarvabhūtādhiṇvāsāḥ sākṣi chetā kevalo nirguṇashcha*. —*Shvetāshvatara Upanishad*, 6.11.
3. *Chhāndogya Upanishad*, 3.14.3.
4. *Aṇor-aṇiyān, mahato mahiyān ātmā asya jantor-niḥito guhāyām*. —*Kaṭha Upanishad*, 1.2.20.
5. *Sūkṣmātisūkṣmān kalilasya madhye vishvasya sraṣṭāram aneka rūpam; Vishvasya ekam pariveshṭitāram ...* —*Shvetāshvatara Upanishad*, 4.14.
6. *Ayam-ātmā brahma*. —*Māṇḍūkya Upanishad*, 2.
7. *Aham brahmāsmi* (I am Brahman). —*Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, 1.4.10.
8. *Tat-tvam-asi*. —*Chhāndogya Upanishad*, 6.8.7.
9. *Sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmani eva anupashyati*. —*Īsha Upanishad*, 6.
10. *Sarva bhūtastham-ātmanam sarva bhūtani cha ātmani ...* —*Bhagavadgītā*, 6.29.
11. *Prajñānam brahma*. —*Āitareya Upanishad*, 3.1.3.
12. *Satyam-jñānam-anantam brahma*. —*Taittirīya Upanishad*, 2.1.
13. *ibid.*
14. See *Gītā*, 8.16-9; *Bhāgavata*, 11.24.21-7.
15. *Purushāt na param kinchit, sā kāśhṭhā sā parā gatiḥ*. —*Kaṭha Upanishad*, 1.3.10-1. 'Purusha' is used in several senses such as a man, a person, a male and the soul which dwells in the body (*pura*). In the Upanishads and the Purāṇas it is often used for Brahman/Ātman and Īshvara, which is different from the concept of supra-cosmic and personal-impersonal Purusha in the 'Purusha Sūkta' of the Vedas, though later on it paved the way to the Upanishadic conception.
16. *Bhāgavata*, 11.6.16.
17. *Sarvam khalu idam brahma*. —*Chhāndogya Upanishad*, 3.14.1.
18. [*Tasmin*] *vijnāte sarvam-idam vijnātam bhavati*. —*Muṇḍaka Upanishad*, 1.1.3; *Vijñānena idam sarvam viditam*. —*Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, 2.4.5.
19. *Saḥ anveshṭavyaḥ, saḥ vijijnāsitavyaḥ*. —*Chhāndogya Upanishad*, 8.7.1.
20. *Ātmā vā are drashtavyaḥ*. —*Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, 2.4.5.
21. *Yat sākshāt aparokṣhāt brahma ya ātmā sarvāntaraḥ* —*ibid.*, 3.4.1.
22. *Īsha Upanishad*, 7; *Taittirīya Upanishad*, 2.7.
23. *Brahmaiva idam vishvam idam varishṭham*. —*Muṇḍaka Upanishad*, 2.2.11; *Āitadātmyam idam sarvam*. —*Chhāndogya Upanishad*, 6.8.7; *Ekam-eva advītyam*. —*Chhāndogya Upanishad*, 6.2.1.
24. *Vishvam darpaṇa-drishyamāna-nagari tulyam nijāntargatam, pashyan ātmani māyayā bahiriva udbhūtam yathā nidrayā*. —*Dakṣiṇāmūrti Stotra*, 1.
25. *Māyā-kalpita desha-kāla-kalanā vaichitrya chitrikritam*. —*ibid.*, 2.
26. *Deha-buddhyā tu dāso'ham jīva buddhyā tvadamshakaḥ; Ātma-buddhyā tvameva aham iti me nishchitā matiḥ*.
27. *Nirvishesham param brahma sākshātkartum-anishvarah; Ye mandāḥ te anukalpyante savishesha-nirūpaṇaiḥ*.

28. *Kāla* = time; *Kāli* is Time personified, for in Time everything comes into existence, flourishes, and decays.
29. *Manaso dhāraṇārthāya*
shighram sva-abhishta-siddhaye,
Sūkshmadhyāna prabodhāya ...
arūpāyaḥ kālīkāyāḥ
Kālamātur mahādhyuteḥ, guṇa-kriyā-anusāreṇa
kriyate rūpa-kalpanā.
30. *Srisṭi-sthiti-vināśhānām shaktibhūte sanātani.*
 —*Chandī* or *Devī-māhātmya*.
31. Compare: Gods like *Maitrā-Varuṇa* and *Vishvedevās* (all-gods).
32. *Naiva strī na pumān eshaḥ*
na chaiva ayam napumsakaḥ;
Yat yat sharīram-ādatte
tena tena sa yuyjate.
 —*Shvetāshvatara Upanishad*, 5.10.
33. *Toam strī toam pumān asi*
toam kumāra uta vā kumārī;
Toam jirṇo daṇḍena vanchasi
toam jāto bhavasi vishvatomukhaḥ. —*ibid.*, 4.3.
34. *Pumrūpam vā smaret devīm*
strirūpam vā'pi chintayet;
Atha vā nishkalam dhyāyet
sat-chit-ānanda lakṣhaṇam.
35. *Na tasya pratimā asti yasya nāma mahad-yashaḥ.*
 —*Shvetāshvatara Upanishad*, 4.19.
36. It is generally thought that we please God by our prayers, and we praise Him in high terms about His wonderful nature and qualities. But it is not God who is benefited; nor does He stand in need of our praise. It is we who are benefited and uplifted psychologically. We are shaped by our conceptions and attitudes with which we are imbued when we worship God. 'Yat dhyāyati tat bhavati. What one meditates upon, that one becomes.' 'Yādriśi bhāvanā yasya siddhiḥ bhavati tādrishī. As are one's sentiments and feelings, so will be one's attainment.' That is the psychological law. The external object of worship is only a help for concentration; it is our feelings and approach that are important. God is all-pervading and infinite and is present everywhere in all beings and entities. He responds to our love and sentiments. So whether the object of worship is a highly refined conception of God or a stone image, it is our inner sentiments and feelings that determine the psychological results that accrue, such as a calm and joyful state of mind, noble character, and divine vision, and even in external results such as help in times of need, since God is omnipresent and knows our mind and attitude. It is not the intellectual conceptions but the emotions of the heart and character that count.
37. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 4.358.
38. *Ruchinām vaichitryāt*
riju-kuṭila nānā pathajushām;
Nrīnām eko gamyaḥ toamasi
payasām arjavo iva.
 —*Shiva-mahimna Stotra*, 7.
39. *Dhyeyam vadanti śhivam eva hi kechit anye*
shaktim gaṇesham apare tu divākaram vai;
Rūpaistu tairapi vibhāsi yataḥ toamekaḥ ...
 —*Shrī Hari-sharaṇāshṭakam*, 1.
40. *Bhāgavata*, 11.24.17-8.
41. *ibid.*, 11.22.9.
42. *Gītā*, 9.10; see *Bhāgavata*, 11.22.17-8.
43. *Gītā*, 9.17-8.
44. *Yo yo yām yām tanum bhaktaḥ*
shraddhayaḥ architum ichchati;
Tasya tasya achalām shraddhām
tām eva vidadhāmi aham.
 —*ibid.*, 7.21; see also 9.23.
45. *Ye yathā mām prapadyante*
tāmstathaiva bhajāmi aham. —*ibid.*, 4.11.
46. *Mayi sarvam idam protam*
sūtre maṇigaṇā iva. —*ibid.*, 7.7.
47. See *Bhāgavata*, 3.9.11; 3.24.31.
48. *Īshvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānām*
hriddeshe arjuna tishṭhati. — *Gītā*, 18.61.
49. *Tasya aham sulabhaḥ pārtha*
nityayuktasya yoginaḥ. —*ibid.*, 8.14.
50. See *ibid.*, 9.22, 26, 30-2; 10.10-1; 18.66.
51. *Aham ātmā guḍākesha*
sarva-bhūtāshaya-sthitaḥ. —*ibid.*, 10.20.
52. *ibid.*, 4.6-8; 9.11.
53. *Bhāgavata*, 11.24.20.

Divyayan Krishi Vigyan Kendra

A Model for Rural Development

SWAMI GANANATHANANDA

All India Radio: Swamiji, could you briefly trace the origin and growth of this institution?

Krishi Vigyan Kendra: During the 1960s the areas Hazaribagh, Chatra and Palamu were in the grip of a severe drought, affecting many people and making them anxious about their bare survival. True to its tradition, the Ramakrishna Mission swung into action by conducting distress relief in the area and supporting the people till normalcy returned. After the relief operations the concerned swamis seriously deliberated on how the local people could be helped to equip themselves to face a similar situation in future. They came to the conclusion that the solution lay in imparting to people a need-based technology in agriculture in a way they could easily understand. That would equip them better to face such situations in future. They decided on building a model training centre under the name 'Divyayan', enrolled the poor farmers in the area, and gave them training in agriculture through a residential course. Though launched initially on an experimental basis in 1969, the project soon won the appreciation of people. This led to the programme being established on a permanent basis under the name 'Divyayan'. A lady devotee from Canada provided initial funds for the project.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, was also thinking about transferring a need-based agriculture technology to grass-roots level farmers with a view to achieving self-sufficiency in the food front by increased food production. They were on the lookout for a suitable strategy, and their search ended when they visited Divyayan. This encouraged the Indian Council of Agri-

cultural Research to formulate a scheme called Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK). In 1977 Divyayan was adopted as a KVK, and from then on the institution never looked back.

The Ramakrishna Mission is well known for its rural development programmes. How did this come about?

In order to understand this we need to understand the evolution of the Ramakrishna Mission. More than a hundred years back Swami Vivekananda traversed our entire country and got a first-hand experience of the misery of the people, whose country was once known for its glorious spiritual heritage. He identified lack of education to be the main cause for this degeneration of the masses. He considered education to be the panacea for all the ills plaguing society and held that education alone can rejuvenate the country. Swamiji felt that the masses had all the qualities, but they lacked technical knowledge and functional skills. What was needed was the help and support of organizations genuinely concerned about and committed to their welfare. The Ramakrishna Mission thus got into serving people, looking upon them as manifestations of divinity. The service rendered becomes an act of worship, aiding the spiritual growth of those who serve: monks, friends and devotees of the Mission.

You have briefly outlined the history of the institution. May I now ask you about the specific programmes offered at this centre.

The activities of this centre can be broadly classified into four groups: (1) educational and cultural, (2) health care, (3) spiritual

development and (4) rural development. Under each group there are different activities. The aim of these groups of activities is to develop and educate the target group in the adopted villages by giving them the 'man-making and character-building education' advocated by Swami Vivekananda. All the activities are geared towards that single aim, with service to God in man in a spirit of worship as the governing philosophy.

Could you tell me more about the rural development programmes at this institution?

There are two types of rural development programmes: One refers to programmes implemented on the Divyayan campus in the form of training and demonstration; the other is about extension programmes conducted in villages. Basically, the idea is to transfer need-based technology to the target group and help them develop a self-sustaining enterprise with the knowledge and skill gained at Divyayan. Presently, agriculture farming has become an enterprise by itself, where the entrepreneur has to be conscious about not only the quantity but also the quality of the produce. They also have to strike a balance between their investment and earnings so that they can pursue a profit-making enterprise and are able to survive on their own.

Could you kindly explain the training methodology adopted at Divyayan KVK?

Divyayan KVK organizes training courses of different kinds. There is a basic motivation course to which admission is open to any grass-roots level farmer in the age group of 16 to 35 years, with or without basic education. In this initial 45-day practical course farmers gain basic knowledge about agriculture and allied disciplines. 'Learning by doing' is the method adopted in this non-formal course. Besides imparting technical skills to farmers, Divyayan motivates them to imbibe and strengthen certain human values in themselves, so that on return to their places they be-

come instrumental in the uplift of fellow villagers.

After this motivation course if a farmer desires to undergo area-specific specialized training, he can attend special courses on agronomy, horticulture, poultry, dairy, workshop trades, beekeeping, mushroom cultivation—to mention a few. In these special courses of three to six months' duration trainees get intensive practical training so that they can organize and run their own independent enterprise in the chosen field of specialization. Besides these courses, Divyayan also offers short-term, need-based courses. Needless to say, all the training programmes are offered free of charge. During these more than three decades of Divyayan's existence, more than 13,000 grass-roots level farmers have been trained in different branches of agriculture and allied disciplines. Divyayan has adopted nearly 70 villages of Angara block, where different programmes relating to water harvesting, agriculture practices and organizing self-help groups are being implemented.

Please tell me something about the extension programmes in villages.

The main thrust of the Divyayan KVK's work is in the villages. The nucleus of this work is a village-level organization comprising Divyayan's ex-trainees. Our trainees are motivated to form service organizations under the name 'Vivekananda Seva Sanghas' (VSS). With a flexible constitution adaptable to local conditions, these Sanghas function as agencies to implement the programmes formulated at Divyayan. Actively networked with Divyayan, these Sanghas maintain a constant liaison with it, with village welfare in mind. There are many field functionaries in between Divyayan and VSS, who in the forward mode remain in active touch with the villagers and in the background mode keep Divyayan informed of the progress of their work and of any incidental problems. Functional in 71 villages, these Seva Sanghas also

conduct non-formal schools in their villages to provide education to school dropouts. Vibrant with activity all the time, these organizations are the nerve centres for effective implementation of development programmes in villages.

These programmes undergo periodic evaluations at Divyayan. Some results: training effectiveness is about 92%, farmers have gained in self-confidence and have created village-level capital to free themselves from moneylenders' clutches. More important, migration to cities in search of jobs, and addiction to drink has almost stopped or significantly reduced in the villages.

Swamiji, here is my last question: What is your ultimate goal in the implementation of the programmes?

This branch of the Ramakrishna Mission aims at an integrated, holistic rural development with thrust on not only economic development, but also inculcation of some important human values in villagers, resulting in individual well-being, mutual fellow feeling and a sense of brotherhood. The movement is ever directed towards the welfare and happiness of the many, as visualized by Swami Vivekananda. *

White or Black?

A shepherd was grazing his sheep when a passerby said, 'That's a fine flock of sheep you have. Could I ask you something about them?' 'Of course,' said the shepherd. Said the man, 'How much would you say your sheep walk each day?' 'Which ones, the white ones or the black ones?' 'The white ones.' 'Well, the white ones walk about four miles a day.' 'And the black ones?' 'The black ones too.'

'And how much grass would you say they eat each day?' 'Which ones, the white or the black?' 'The white ones.' 'Well, the white ones eat about four pounds of grass each day.' 'And the black ones?' 'The black ones too.'

'And how much wool would you say they give each year?' 'Which ones, the white or the black?' 'The white ones.' 'Well, I'd say the white ones give some six pounds of wool each year at the shearing time.' 'And the black ones?' 'The black ones too.'

The passerby was intrigued. 'May I ask you why you have the strange habit of dividing your sheep into white and black each time you answer one of my questions?' 'Well,' said the shepherd, 'that's only natural. The white ones are mine, you see.' 'Ah! And the black ones?' 'The black ones too,' said the shepherd.

The human mind makes foolish divisions in what Love sees as One.

—Anthony de Mello, *The Prayer of the Frog*, 2.230

Jābāla Upaniṣad

TRANSLATED BY SWAMI ATMAPRIYANANDA

Section Four

Inquiry into the Knowledge [which arises from] renunciation of all actions [with desire]

सर्वकर्मसंन्यासज्ञानजिज्ञासा

अथ जनको ह वैदेहो याज्ञवल्क्यमुपसमेत्योवाच । भगवन्संन्यासमनुब्रूहीति । स होवाच याज्ञवल्क्यः । ब्रह्मचर्यं समाप्य गृही भवेत् । गृही भूत्वा वनी भवेत् । वनी भूत्वा प्रव्रजेत् । यदि वेतरथा ब्रह्मचर्यदेव प्रव्रजेद्ब्रह्माद्वा वनाद्वा । अथ पुनरव्रती वा व्रती वा स्नातको वास्नातको वा उत्सन्नाग्निरनग्निको वा यदहरेव विरजेत्तदहरेव प्रव्रजेत् ॥१॥

1. Then, Janaka, [the king] of Videha, approached Yājñavalkya and said: 'Bhagavan (revered, all-knowing sage), expound [to me] the [tenets] of renunciation (*sannyāsa*).'¹ He, Yājñavalkya, then said: 'After completing the period of *brahmacarya*,² one may become a householder (*gṛhastha*).³ After being a householder, he may become a forest-dweller (*vānaprasthin*).³ After being a *vānaprasthin*, he may renounce the world [and become a monk]. Or, on the other hand, he may renounce the world from the stage of *brahmacarya* itself⁴ (celibate studentship under a spiritual preceptor in *gurugṛha*) or of *gṛhasthya* (householder's life) or of *vānaprastha* (retirement in a forest).⁵ Further, again, [a person may embrace the life of renunciation of all worldly ties and attachments] whether he happens to be an observer of vows or not,⁶ whether he has completed his Vedic studies (that is, has graduated in his studies) or not,⁷ or whether he has discontinued maintaining the sacred fire at the death of his wife or does not maintain the fire [for other causes].⁸ [Thus] one may renounce the worldly life [and embrace *sannyāsa*] that very day when dispassion (*vairāgya*) dawns on him.⁹

(to be continued)

Notes

1. *Brahmacarya* is an *āśrama* or stage of life consisting of discipleship in the *gurugṛha*, that is, in the spiritual teacher's home, practising celibacy and living an intensely austere life devoted to study and contemplation of the Vedas and other scriptures under the *guru's* loving care and guidance.
2. Having become a householder, he shall spend his time performing as far as possible desireless action calculated to do good to society.
3. *Vānaprastha* is the third *āśrama* or stage of life after the *gṛhastha āśrama* (householder's life). After fulfilling his duties in the world and getting tired of any more worldly activity, a householder should retire into a forest. In the modern context, this may be interpreted as a quiet place away from the din and bustle of hectic activity. There he should devote himself exclusively to contemplation on God, the hereafter and the higher values of life.
4. When a feeling of intense dispassion (*vairāgya*) arises in the mind of a spiritual aspirant, then, having finished with the study of Vedānta, he may renounce the world and embrace *sannyāsa* straightaway from the *brahmacarya* stage (that is, without going through the other stages of *gṛhasthya* and *vānaprastha*). Moreover, he may then enter a higher stage of *sannyāsa*, namely, that of a *paramahansa*, without going through the other lower stages of *kuṭīcaka*, *bahūdaka* and *hansa* (see the fourth *mantra* of the

Turiyātita Avadhūta Upaniṣad), for these lower stages are for those renunciators whose dispassion is weak, fragile (technically, those possessed of *manda vairāgya*).

5. Since dispassion (*vairāgya*) is the only essential requirement for renunciation (*sannyāsa*), there is no presupposition of a particular stage of life (*āśrama*)—this is the main thrust of the argument.
6. Even after the completion of his initiation into the *vānaprastha* stage, if he does not obtain *sannyāsa* for some reason, then his state will be twofold: *japa* (repetition of *mantras*) and *dhyāna* (meditation). This indeed is his vow (*vrata*). One who observes this vow is called a *vratin* and one who does not is called an *avratin*. —Upaniṣad Brahmayogin’s commentary.
7. The technical term used in the text is *snātaka*, one who has completed his Vedic study in the *brahmacharya āśrama*. An *asnātaka* is one who has a smattering of the Vedas.
8. Among the householders, again, there are two types: (1) one who has accepted the sacred fire and its maintenance as part of his stage of life, but has discontinued it at his wife’s death. Such a person is called an *utsannāgni* (literally, one who has abandoned the [sacred] fire); (2) one who has not accepted the sacred fire despite having a wife, on account of his lack of proper *saṁskāras* (purificatory ceremonies). Such a person is called an *anagnika* (literally, one who is without the [sacred] fire). Householders of both the types may renounce the world and embrace *sannyāsa*, provided they are seized by dispassion (*vairāgya*).
9. After elaborately discussing the conditions for renunciation, the Upaniṣad ends the discussion by saying: What more needs to be said? There is no time-bound framework or rule for embracing a life of renunciation (*sannyāsa*)—the only condition for *sannyāsa* is the overpowering of the personality by dispassion (*vairāgya*).

The More You Go towards the East ...

Therefore all the senses should be brought under control. Although all senses are turbulent, the tongue and the sex organ are undoubtedly the prominent ones. It is mentioned in the *Bhagavata*: ‘Even if a person has gained mastery over all the other senses, he cannot be called conqueror of the senses until he has subdued the tongue. If the tongue is conquered, all the other senses are as good as conquered’ (11.8.21). Therefore control of the tongue is the first duty. But the Lord has said from another standpoint: ‘The objects of the senses fall away from a man practising abstinence, but not the taste for them. But even the taste falls away when the Supreme is seen.’ (*Gita*, 2.59)

Our Master used to say, ‘He who has tasted syrup made from sugar candy regards a drink made from treacle as a mere trifle.’ In other words, if one has developed love for God, one does not care for human love. One should have love for God; then sense objects will become distasteful. Everything becomes worthless in comparison. As ‘the more you go towards the east, the farther you will be from the west’, likewise, the more you want to go towards the Lord, the more you will leave sense attractions behind. One need not make any special attempt to get rid of them. That is the secret. The essential thing is to worship God. If you do that, you will not have to strive to control the tongue and other senses—they will be controlled automatically.

—Swami Turiyananda, *Spiritual Treasures*, 118

❧ Glimpses of Holy Lives ❧

The Silent Influence of Holy Company

Lala Ramnarayanji and Dayaliram were two Punjabi merchants who migrated to Varanasi in search of better business opportunities. Of the two, Ramnarayan was an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva. Though a businessman by occupation, he never swerved from the path of virtue and honesty and regarded his prosperity as due to Lord Shiva's grace. It is common knowledge that wealth begets pride and selfishness. But in Ramnarayan's case it was just the reverse. As his wealth increased so did his humility and detachment. He looked upon himself as merely a trustee of the riches that Lord Shiva had bestowed on him, and spent the greater part of his income in charity. As a result his fame spread far and wide.

Though Ramnarayan was quite friendly with Dayaliram, the latter inwardly resented his prosperity and popularity. He would secretly try to harm his unsuspecting friend in various ways. Guileless Ramnarayan was often surprised to find his friendly gestures met with malice by Dayaliram. Gradually Dayaliram's ill will developed into open hatred; he began to verbally abuse and insult Ramnarayan on the slightest pretext. Seeing that Ramnarayan did not offer any kind of resistance, an emboldened Dayaliram took to intimidation and had him beaten up by ruffians. Once he even went to the extent of setting his friend's shop on fire, seeking to damage Ramnarayan's business.

One morning, as Ramnarayan was returning from his bath in the Ganga, Dayaliram accosted him and tried to draw him into a quarrel. Loudly accusing Ramnarayan of business malpractices, he struck him with his shoe! Far from reacting violently, Ramnarayan bore even this with fortitude. Smiling

sadly, he walked away. Ramnarayan was sad not because he was humiliated but because his friend had sunk so low. He worried about Dayaliram's well-being and determined to bring him around, resolving to show more love towards his fallen friend.

How the Change Came About

Whatever mental vibrations a person emanates will eventually come back to him. If he sends out thoughts of hatred towards another, those vibrations will evoke similar thoughts in that person, thereby causing him to hate in return. Thus both become bound up in a negative relationship of hate, each trying to destroy the other. However, if a person responds to his 'enemy' with thoughts of love, those thoughts are sure to conquer the 'enemy' in the end. This is a law of the subtle world: love breeds love, hatred breeds hatred.

Ramnarayan was full of love and compassion, whereas Dayaliram's crooked heart was full of bitterness and resentment. But then, goodness is stronger than wickedness. As days went by, Ramnarayan's determination to bring his friend back to the path of righteousness began to bear fruit. Unknown to himself, Dayaliram was influenced by Ramnarayan's goodness and he began to show signs of repentance.

But Ramnarayan sought to reform his friend completely, not just outwardly. He prayed to Lord Shiva for Dayaliram's spiritual welfare: 'Lord, it distresses me greatly to see how low Dayaliram has stooped. You dwell in the hearts of all. If you think I have even a trace of ill feeling towards my friend, punish me; but may peace, brotherliness and love dwell in Dayaliram's heart. I am ready to suffer hell fire if that soothes and purifies his heart. All my

riches, all the honour that I enjoy are due to Your grace. But if they be the cause of enmity, O Lord, I don't want them; please take back Your gifts and make me a humble beggar! So far as I am aware, I have never prayed for earthly things. Nor do I remember to have ever used Your gifts selfishly—I have always considered myself a mere custodian and dedicated them to the service of Your devotees. ... But it is egotistic on my part even to think like this, because it is You alone who are getting such things done through me. Still, my Lord, I suspect that there is hidden somewhere in my heart some hypocrisy, some impurity I don't know about, or why should Dayaliram be so hostile towards me? How else could I stir up such violent feelings in the heart of my own friend? Besides, how can I confidently say that I have absolutely no desire for wealth and honour, that I use all my riches in Your service—as if I understood all my motives fully? That itself is a great sin. Lord, I don't know what to say. Kindly do what You think is best for both of us, but my heart cries in anguish for Dayaliram's well-being ...'

Absorbed in intense prayer, Ramnarayan lost consciousness of the outer world. In that state he saw a divine vision. Shiva, the God of gods, appeared before him. Affectionately placing His hand on the devotee's head, Lord Shiva spoke to him: 'Ramnarayan, I am deeply touched by your faith, devotion and selflessness. You and Dayaliram were both merchants in your past lives. You walked on the path of virtue whereas your friend, though a brahmin by birth, chose evil company and strayed from the path of morality. Under the influence of his terrible greed he turned into a robber. One night he came to rob your house and you, instead of resisting him, gave away whatever he wanted to have. You even initiated him with My mantra. Your large-heartedness and compassion had a profound effect on him and he began to worship Me. Once he went on a pilgrimage to Rameswaram and

worshipped Me with Ganga water and bel leaves. But the sins he had already committed were too great, and in his next birth he was born as an evil spirit. However, due to his association with you and his worship of Me this evil birth lasted only ten years. Again he was reborn as a human being, only to continue in his old evil ways due to the bad tendencies he had failed to overcome in his earlier lives. Throughout your last three incarnations, impelled by karma, he has worked to injure you and you in return have consistently worked for his welfare, without harbouring a grudge. All this time your love has been silently transforming Dayaliram, and today your prayer has succeeded in completely purifying his heart. You have come out of these trials successful. Ramnarayan, I am much pleased with you. Blessed you are that there is not the least trace of worldliness in your pure heart. Rest assured that you have always served Me most selflessly. A self-centred person can never serve Me; I have no use for such a person's money. You are sure to come to Me at the end of this life. Until then remain in the world remembering Me and discharging your duties.'

When Ramnarayan regained external consciousness he found Dayaliram holding his feet, sobbing uncontrollably. Lamenting how greatly he had troubled his holy friend, Dayaliram shed burning tears of repentance. Ramnarayan raised him up and embraced him, assuring his friend that he was no more the old Dayaliram but a recipient of the Lord's mercy.

Divine grace, his friend's goodness and his own sincere repentance had thoroughly cleansed Dayaliram. He prayed to be initiated by Ramnarayan. As soon as the mantra was uttered in his ear, the mantra that he had received long, long ago gushed up from his heart like a hidden spring. Henceforth both friends devoted themselves entirely to spiritual practices and served Lord Shiva till the end of their lives. *

Lakṣmī Tantra (A Pāñcarātra Text)

Dr Sanjukta Gupta. Motilal Banarsidass, 41-UA Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar
New Delhi 110 007. 2000. 398 pp. Rs 295.

From time immemorial Tāntric Yoga has been considered to be the highest and most rapid path to spiritual enlightenment. As early as 1916 Otto Schrader recommended the *Lakṣmī Tantra* for a meaningful study of Pāñcarātra philosophy. If Viṣṇuism is regarded as one of the chief religions of the Hindus, the Pāñcarātra is the oldest surviving Viṣṇuīte sect. In spite of constant change and corruption, says Dr Gupta, the detailed ritual worship prescribed in the old Pāñcarātra texts is still performed and practised in many of the famous temples in southern India and some in the north.

Lakṣmī Tantra stands out prominent because of its exclusive treatment of the mother-goddess Lakṣmī, the *śakti* of Viṣṇu- Nārāyaṇa. *Śakti* is regarded as the supreme metaphysical principle. The most striking feature of the *Lakṣmī Tantra* is that it has made attempts to make a synthesis of all the concepts current in the Pāñcatantra and Tāntric milieu. It does not always succeed in blending all these notions smoothly. The author feels that she could not blend all the contradictory ideas obtained from the Sāṅkhya realism and the radical monism of Śaṅkara (Advaitavāda).

The fundamental philosophical postulates underlying the *Lakṣmī Tantra* are incorporated in the five realities. Starting from the highest, these are God, the absolute void, *puruṣa*, *śakti*, *niyati*, *kāla*, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, *māyā*, *prasūti*, *prakṛti*, *buddhi*, *manas* and *ahaṅkāra*, the ten cognitive and conative organs, the five subtle and the five gross elements. These represent the basic stages of creation. *Puruṣa* is the collective Man and his *śakti*

is Mahālakṣmī, the active aspect of God. *Niyati* is Mahāvidyā, who represents the cosmic wisdom recorded in the Vedas and who controls law and order in the universe. *Kāla* is Mahāśakti, who is, in fact, primordial nature or the material source of creation. The subtle distinctions in the stages of primordial nature from *kāla* to *prakṛti* enable the Pāñcarātra system to achieve some degree of consistency in incorporating the Purāṇic concept of creation.

According to Dr Gupta, various streams of ideas have been reflected in the diverse religious traditions like the anthropomorphic creator, the mythological concept of Prajāpati Brahmā, the Upaniṣadic concept of *anirvācya brahma*, and the Sāṅkhya concept of *prakṛti-puruṣa*. The eternal unchangeable Reality has, however, two aspects. In one it is devoid of polarity (*nirālambana-bhāvanam*). In the other aspect, all these divine qualities are manifest. Thus Brahman is absolute Being, whereas Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa is both Being and Becoming, or, in other words, manifested Being. No reason for Brahman's manifestation or Becoming is proffered. It is just a will, a pleasure (*līlā*) of the Supreme.

The author has tried to explain the second aspect of the supreme Being, which she describes as God's Śakti, who is knowledge, bliss and activity. In this second aspect, Brahman is polarized into the divine power (*śakti*) and the possessor of the divine power (*Śaktimat*). Śakti is inherent in God just as light is inherent in the sun. She is inseparable from God, yet not absolutely identified with Him. Two phrases are often used in the text to denote this relationship existing between Śakti (Lakṣmī)

and God: *bhavat-bhāvātma* (being and becoming) and *ahamartha-aharītā* (I-entity and I-hood). These terms exactly describe the relationship. Lakṣmī is the Becoming, or the subsistence of the absolutely existing God. She is also the self-hood of the supreme Self (*param-ātman*), that is, of God. In other words, Lakṣmī is God's *śakti*, His essential nature. She is the divine presence. She forms the so-called body of Nārāyaṇa consisting of the six divine qualities (*guṇas*): *jñāna*, *śakti*, *aśvarya*, *bala*, *vīrya* and *tejas*. These *guṇas* contain all the Pāñcarātra concepts of a supreme God. Hence, embodying these *guṇas*, Śakti actually replaces God by performing all His divine functions and yet remains inseparable from Him. This is a unity-in-duality, a two-in-One, the *advaya-tattva*.

About liberation *Lakṣmī Tantra* has followed the true nature of Vaiṣṇava emancipation. The liberated being is not absolutely extinguished in the existence of the absolute Being, but is lifted up to the level of transcendental existence. The existence is identical with that of Śakti. The concept of liberation basically depends on (1) the concept of Śakti and Her relation to God, and (2) the concept of the *jīvas'* relation to God as being parts of a whole.

According to Dr Gupta, the *Lakṣmī Tantra* contains hundreds of millions of verses and her present translation is only an abridged version of the original text. It is very difficult

to ascertain whether the *Lakṣmī Tantra* has followed any particular philosophical system. But if properly scrutinized, we find well knit in the text two philosophical systems, Sāṅkhya and Vedānta, as well as the influence of Mahāyāna Buddhism along with the *Bhagavadgītā*. However, the main thrust of the *Lakṣmī Tantra* is to establish the supremacy of Lakṣmī as a philosophical principle and concentrate and dedicate the central ritual worship to her.

Dr Gupta has done a monumental work in bringing out this book consisting of fifty-seven sections with a detailed introductory note. For any serious scholar doing research work in this field, the present book is really a boon. The worth of the book has been further enriched by five important diagrams (including two colour diagrams depicting *navapadma-maṇḍala*, *cakrābja-maṇḍala* and *navanābha-maṇḍala*) along with authentic indexes of terms and mantras. The scholarly author must be congratulated for her comprehensive research in the field of *tantra-śāstra*. For generations to come this book will give inspiration and fruitful guidance to serious-minded researchers both in India and abroad. *

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Jesus at the Football Match

Jesus Christ said he had never been to a football match. So we took him to one, my friends and I. It was a ferocious battle between the Protestant Punchers and the Catholic Crusaders. The Crusaders scored first. Jesus cheered wildly and threw his hat high up in the air. Then the Punchers scored. And Jesus cheered wildly and threw his hat high up in the air.

This seemed to puzzle the man behind us. He tapped Jesus on the shoulder and asked, 'Which side are you rooting for, my good man?' 'Me?' replied Jesus, all excited, 'I'm not rooting for either side. I'm just enjoying the game.'

The questioner turned to his neighbour and sneered, 'Hmm, an atheist!'

—Anthony de Mello, *The Song of the Bird*, 168-9



Reviews



*For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA
publishers need to send two copies of their latest publications.*

The Essence of the Gita. *Swami Saradananda; trans. Swami Tyagananda.* Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai 600 004. 2000. 125 pp. Rs 25.

This book is a slender yet invaluable addition to *Gītā* literature. It contains a series of six talks delivered in Bengali by Swami Saradanandaji, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, to a predominantly young audience. The lectures have been translated by Swami Tyaganandaji, a former editor of the *Vedanta Kesari*. The book consists of an 'Introduction', two chapters on 'Jnana Yoga', two chapters on 'Karma Yoga' and one on 'Knowledge and Devotion'. Swami Tyaganandaji ascribes pithy subtitles which essentially convey the message of the *Gītā*. Some of them are 'The body, the mind and the Self', 'karma and rebirth', 'Self-knowledge, the goal of life', 'intense rest in the midst of intense activity', 'the characteristics of an illumined person', 'renunciation, the only path to perfection', 'wrong notions about work and non-work', 'the utility of karma', 'the art of doing work', 'desire, the root of all troubles', 'the role of fate', 'harmony between jnana and karma', 'karma leads to knowledge', 'knowledge versus devotion', 'harmonizing one's thoughts and speech', and 'seeing God in everything'.

The necessity of knowing one's true nature, intense detachment, abstaining from the reaction which inevitably follows every work we do, cultivation of a yogi's calmness in the intoxicating battle of life, and doing work with a higher purpose and unselfish attitude—these are the essential teachings of the *Gītā*, as revealed in the pages of this book. Readers can easily understand them. More so because these words have come from a realized soul who himself had struggled hard to assimilate these teachings. Saradanandaji was a personification of calmness, equipoise and perfection amidst the whirlpool of activity—the very characteristics described in the *Gītā*.

The cover and printing are both excellent. This book is commended for all: youths, academics, devotees and lay people who want to lead a life of harmony and enlightenment.

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Kālāmukha and Pāsupata Temples in Dharwar. *Dr (Mrs) Vasundhara Filliozat.* Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute, B4 TVK Road, Mylapore, Chennai 600 004. 2001. xiv + 256 pp. Rs 250.

This book is the outcome of a deep research on various aspects relating to the planning of and ritualistic worship in the temples belonging to the less-known Pashupata and Kalamukha sects of Shaivism, which are confined to the northern region of Karnataka. The author successfully clarifies the prevailing misconceptions regarding these religious sects belonging to Lakula-Shaivism, based on the adverse comments of Yamunacharya, Ramanuja and Madhavacharya, who were Vaishnavite philosophers. According to the author Pashupatas and Kalamukhas were not *vamacharins* (followers of the left path), but were essentially followers of the *dakshinachara* (right path) system of worship. The *Lakulisha Agama* which guided the Pashupata and Kalamukha systems of worship is not available now; it is possible to know about them only through the Puranas, *sthala mahatmya* (greatness of the holy place) literature and epigraphical data.

According to the Puranas the four disciples of Sage Lakulisha had founded four subdivisions of Lakula-Shaivism, namely, Kalamukha, Pashupata, Kapalika and Kaula. The latter two sects follow *vamachara*. It is interesting to note that modern Virashaivism, which was founded by Basava, is a modified and refined version of Kalamukha and

Pashupata Shaivism. It is generally believed that the Kalamukhas are those who blackened their faces by smearing black cinder. This is not correct. They are worshippers of Shiva with five faces—which are associated with five Kalas—and hence called Kalamukhas. The systems of worship followed by Pashupatas and Kalamukhas are almost identical, but the Kalamukhas attached more importance to Shakti (Goddess), while the Pashupatas adored the lion (Simha), Her vehicle. In Karnataka both Pashupata and Kalamuka saints were called 'Mahavratins' or just 'Bratis' or 'Vratins'.

This book deals in detail with the severe austerities (*vratas*) to be undertaken or performed by these saints. The *Shiva Purana* lays down the detailed code for the observance of these *vratas*. All the pontiffs of these systems of Shaivism owed their allegiance to Mallikarjuna and Brahmarambha of Sri-sailam in Andhra Pradesh on the banks of River Krishna. In the chapter dealing with the history of Karnataka the author traces the origins of the spread of Pashupata and Kalamukha systems of Shaivism in Karnataka.

The Shiva temples referred to in this book belong to the period when Kalyani Chalukyas and Hoysalas ruled various parts of Karnataka. The author has given more emphasis to the iconographical aspects of these temples, including the ones in the Dharwar region. Equal importance should have been given to the architectural characteristics also. The *antarala*—the narrow vestibule which separates the *garbhagriha* from the *rangamandapa* (*mahamandapa*)—is referred to in this book as *sukhanasi*. According to *shilpa-vastu sastras*, the *sukhanasi* is in fact an architectural frontal motif prominently placed above the *antarala* and attached to the *vimana* or *shikhara* roofing the *garbhagriha*. Though this book mainly deals with the Pasupata-Kalamukha temples of the Dharwar region, the general reader will have no idea about the architectural styles and other features which distinguish them from other temple architectural styles of India. This deficiency could have been overcome by providing photographic views and ground plans of at least the temples with which this book deals in detail.

The book contains eight appendices covering more than two thirds of the book. Each appendix contains the Sanskrit original extracted from various Shiva Puranas and their translation into English. Wherever possible, the author could have omitted the Sanskrit originals extracted from Pura-

nas, and given enough room for more photographs and other illustrations in the shape of drawings of the plans, elevations and sections of the temples dealt with in this book. On the whole this book can be recommended to scholars who have undertaken research regarding the evolution of the planning patterns and architectural forms of Indian temples, which have been influenced by the ritualistic worship of people in various parts of India.

Mrs Filliozat is to be congratulated on the enormous pains she has taken to study in depth the glory that is the Indian temple.

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The Prasthanatraya—An Introduction.

Swami Harshananda. Ramakrishna Math, Bull Temple Road, Bangalore 560 019. 2001. viii + 134 pp. Rs 25.

Swami Harshananda is an acknowledged authority on Indian scriptures and his extensive publications in this field are well known. This small book is an invaluable addition to the area. It gives the essence of the three foundational texts which spell out the final goal of human existence and form the basis of the Vedanta philosophy. They are the *Bhagavadgita*, the Upanishads and the *Brahma Sutras*, together called the *prasthanatraya*. Published earlier as separate booklets, these three have been put together for the first time in a convenient volume helpful to those who want to be introduced to these texts for the first time or to those who want to use it as a ready reference.

The book is divided into three broad sections and each of these is subdivided into chapters. The first section deals with the *smritiprasthana*, that is, the *Bhagavadgita*. It speaks about the date of composition, its author, its philosophy (a chapter-wise summary) and commentaries of some great thinkers along with the dates. In conclusion, the author stresses the continuing relevance of this text, its sublimity, universal outlook and its independent existence in spite of its being a part of the larger epic, the *Mahabharata*. He considers it the quintessence of this monumental epic.

The next section is on the Upanishads and is the longest one in the book comprising thirteen chapters. Belonging to the category of the *srutiprasthana* or the revealed scriptures, these texts are said to be

the highest representatives of the Hindu spiritual tradition. The author observes that 'the Upanishads have created, strengthened and preserved a great tradition of spirituality ... by a fearless spirit of inquiry ... by intuitive mystical experiences beyond the ken of the intellect ... converging to a unitive principle.' In this section the author has identified the oldest and most authoritative works from a larger body of compositions included under the heading of Upanishads. Under the discussion of their philosophy Harshanandaji has taken up concepts that engage the human being at all times, such as Brahman, Atman, creation, bondage and liberation, eschatology, and *vidyas* or *upasanas*.

The last section of the book deals with the *Brahma Sutras* and begins with an explication of the term *sutra*. Then the author and the work are introduced followed by a summary of the four *adhyayas* of the text: *samanvayadhyaya*, which attempts to harmonize the principles of the Upanishads; *avirodhadhyaya*, which dispels contradictions; *sadhana-dhyaya*, which discusses diverse topics such as transmigration, karma, dream-creations, *vidyas*, rituals, *ashramas* and *prayashcittas*; and finally *phaladhyaya*, which mainly concentrates on the *jiva's* journey after death.

It is to the credit of the author that he has explicated such abstruse doctrines with the greatest clarity and brevity. The volume is thus indispensable to all who have some interest in matters spiritual. The pleasing getup, symbolic cover design and reader-friendly print add to the value of this comprehensive volume.

Dr M Sivaramkrishna

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God is Everything. Swami Sarvagatananda.
Vedanta Society of Toronto, 120 Emmett
Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M6M 2E6.
2001. 130 + x pp. Hardback US\$ 15, paper-
back US\$ 12.

This book is based on the lectures that Swami Sarvagatananda, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and former head of the Vedanta Societies of Boston and Providence, gave at a retreat in Toronto. Although so many other books are available on all Upanishads, including the *Ishavasya Upanishad*, the one under review is unique in the

way the author has handled and presented the subject matter. He seems to be not only speaking directly from his own heart, but also talking to readers face to face. Of the 130 pages of the book, twelve pages comprise the glossary, bibliography and index, which immensely increase its value.

Like any other Upanishad, the main objective of the *Ishavasya Upanishad* is to impart the knowledge of Brahman. However, this Upanishad focuses our attention on the immanence of the Divinity in everything that constitutes this manifest universe. Hence *God is Everything* is an apt title for this book. But the swami is quick to point out on page 5 that he would rather prefer the words, 'ruling force' or 'spiritual force' to 'God'. For the latter gives the impression of a deity sitting above the clouds, while the God of the Upanishads is the nearest of the near. It is He who sees through our eyes, hears through our ears and thinks through our mind. That spiritual force is also called the Self or Atman. The Atman is identical with Brahman, the cosmic consciousness, which the swami calls blissful or loving consciousness, which like space is infinite and constant. So the first verse says, 'The ruling force dwells in all of this, in every bit of it, even in anything that is changing or moving. By that renunciation, enjoy; do not covet the wealth of anyone' (5). The remaining seventeen verses of this Upanishad are nothing but the elaboration of the same theme.

How do we know that God or the ruling force is immanent in every particle of this universe? An implied answer to this question is that the sages of this Upanishad said everything based on their own experience. However, the swami provides examples of many illumined souls to validate the truth of this verse. In particular, direct testimonies from the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda are cited to bring home the meaning of this first verse. For example, Sri Ramakrishna said, 'I see that it is God Himself who has become all this. It seems to me that men and other living beings are made of leather, and that it is God Himself who, dwelling inside these leather cases, moves the hands, the feet, the heads' (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, 941-2). The author's extensive quotes from the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swamiji to illustrate the meaning and verification of the truth of the first and other seventeen verses is a unique feature of this book. At the same time one can now better understand the subtle meanings of the *Gospel* and Swamiji's *Com-*

plete *Works*. Holy Mother's last message, which also the Swami quotes, 'Learn to make the whole world your own. No one is a stranger, my child; the whole world is your own' (14), assumes a new significance in the context of this verse. So also Mahatma Gandhi's ideas on Trusteeship and equality of all castes and calling untouchables as Harijans (15-6) find their philosophical underpinnings in the first verse.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say that the purpose of life is to realize the Self. Why? For the Self is blissful and immortal. In this changing world there is nothing permanent. We must give up the idea of proprietorship. By detaching from that which is transient and holding fast to the One that is permanent, one can enjoy life on earth. The next two verses resolve this seeming contradiction between renunciation and enjoyment. There are other such contradictions throughout this Upanishad, which the author has adroitly resolved by referring back to the meaning of the first verse.

Most importantly, Swami Sarvagatananda seems very authentic in his exposition when he provides some personal anecdotes about his own guru, Swami Akhandanandaji, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. Similarly, the swami's appreciation of a fellow Muslim passenger during a train journey from Lahore to Calcutta in 1944 is a further verification of the universal message of this Upanishad. (12)

Although this is a relatively short Upanishad with only eighteen verses, the swami cautions the reader not to hurry it through, but use the threefold technique often urged by ancient sages for realizing the Self. They are *sravana*, *manana* and *nididhaysana* (3-4, 117-8). He has reinforced this advice by quoting his own guru (18-9), who impressed on him the value of introspection and conducting our lives in what the swami calls a 'conscientious-conscious way'.

Lastly, Vedanta Society of Toronto should be thanked for publishing these excellent lectures. However, even the moderate price set for this book is beyond the reach of many of our compatriots in India. I would, therefore, like to urge any of the two publishing houses of the Ramakrishna Order to get

the publishing and distribution rights for India at an affordable price.

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Hinduism—A Panoramic View. Swami Harshananda. Ramakrishna Math, Bangalore. 1999. 40 pp. Rs 10.

This book is a successful elucidation of the meaning of Hinduism in a changing society. Swami Harshanandaji has rightly emphasized that the perspectives of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda are as relevant today as they are significant. A society cannot be prosperous without religion. Again, religion cannot endure except within the ambit of society.

Sri Ramakrishna alluded to the householder's way of life as the basis of social life. Swami Vivekananda also said as much: 'The householder is the basis, the prop, of the whole society. He is the principal earner. The poor, the weak, the children and the women who do not work—all live upon the householder' (CW, 1.45). Hinduism is a way of life offering guidance to people in all stages of life, householders included. It defines four basic values: righteousness (*dharma*), wealth (*artha*), desire (*kama*) and liberation (*moksha*).

Every ritual a Hindu observes—the naming ceremony (*namakarana*), the first-feeding ceremony (*annaprashana*), to mention two—has a philosophy behind. The author brings out clearly the philosophy behind various acts and rituals in a Hindu's life. He also surveys the various stages through which Hinduism has traversed: from the Upanishadic to the modern. The Hindu believes that his religion is destined to have a more glorious future. The author justly remarks that 'there is an urgent need to give a new look to the Hindu society, to make it more homogeneous or, at least, more united.' (35)

A brief but authentic interpretation of Hindu scriptures, this booklet is sure to inspire everyone.

Swami Girishatmananda
Belur Math

Nothing dies faster than a new idea in a closed mind.

❧ Reports ❧

Commissioned. Mobile medical service; by Ramakrishna Mission (Advaita Ashrama), Jammu; on 2 August.

Visited. Uttar Pradesh Governor Sri Vishnukant Shastri; Ramakrishna Math, Lucknow; on 9 August. He inaugurated a 3-day *Ram-charitmanas* discourse.

Inaugurated. The central administrative block, Saradananda Bhavan, and three thoroughly renovated monks' quarters; at Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Viveknagar; by Srimat Swami Atmasthanan-

daji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission; on 21 and 31 August, respectively.

Won. Second prize at the state-level Youth Parliament Scheme competition organized by the West Bengal government; by students of Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, Belur; on 28 August.

Secured. 1st and 4th ranks in this year's Calcutta University BSc (General) examination; by two students of the college run by Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Rahara.

Gujarat Earthquake Relief and Rehabilitation Project (Progress up to 31 March 2002)

A report issued by

Swami Smarananandaji, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission

The massive earthquake that rocked Gujarat on 26 January 2001 was one of the worst natural disasters in the country. Out of 25 districts of Gujarat, 21 districts having 181 talukas and 7633 villages fell prey to this calamity.

Primary Relief: The Ramakrishna Mission conducted extensive relief operations from the very first day itself. Cooked food, food packets, food grains, drinking water, tarpaulins, tents, blankets and clothes were distributed to tens of thousands of quake-affected people of nearly 281 villages in Kutch, Rajkot, Jamnagar, Porbandar and Surendranagar districts through our Rajkot, Porbandar and Limbdi centres. Medical camps were also conducted at Bhuj and surrounding areas.

After distribution of these items in the first phase of primary relief, about 3400 families rendered homeless by the earthquake were provided temporary shelters.

The total amount spent on primary relief was nearly Rs 3 crore.

Rehabilitation: After conducting primary relief, the Ramakrishna Mission undertook a massive rehabilitation project. On 16 February the General Secretary performed *bhumi puja* (ground-breaking ceremony) for the proposed new township at Dhaneti village near Bhuj in Kutch in the presence of several monks, government officials and many other distinguished persons. Construction of houses started on 23 March at Dhaneti village through our Rajkot centre.

Meanwhile, the Government of Gujarat started giving cash subsidies to earthquake victims, category-wise, under the Build Your Own House scheme. Those for whom any voluntary organization

had proposed to build houses were not entitled for the subsidy and they were to relinquish their old lands. Therefore, most of the villagers preferred accepting cash subsidy from the government. On the other hand, the Gujarat government authorities requested us to take up reconstruction of as many primary school buildings as possible. Therefore, the Mission had to reduce the number of dwelling houses to be built, and take up instead construction of school buildings in many places. Large-scale rehabilitation projects were launched in Kutch, Porbandar, Rajkot and Surendranagar districts through our Rajkot, Porbandar and Limbdi centres, and through the rehabilitation camps at Surendranagar, Dhaneti (Kutch) and Morbi (Rajkot). The projects included the following: (i) construction of 353 houses, 76 school buildings, 2 community centres and 2 prayer halls; (ii) providing building materials to 159 families under the Build Your Own House scheme; (iii) digging 7 ponds, water reservoirs, etc.

Inauguration of Buildings: On 30 June 2001 the first two newly built primary school buildings were inaugurated and handed over to the school authorities. Subsequently, at regular intervals, the school buildings and housing colonies were completed and handed over. His Excellency the Governor of Gujarat, the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Gujarat, Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission, the General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission, and other dignitaries inaugurated the buildings at different places. The construction work of the remaining houses and school buildings is in progress. Till now 43 newly built school buildings and 240 houses have been inaugurated and handed over to school authorities and beneficiaries. Although our original target was Rs 10 crore, in view of overwhelming response from generous donors, both from India and abroad, we had to extend it to nearly Rs 16 crore.

We are glad to inform the donors that all Indian donations received under 100% income tax exemption were fully utilized by 10 March 2002. Needless to mention, we could not have undertaken such a massive primary relief work and huge rehabilitation projects without the unstinted support and cooperation from generous and large-hearted people, benevolent organizations, volunteers and others, their sympathetic concern, spontaneous response and painstaking hard work for the noble cause.

This progress report is just for information and not an appeal for further donations.

Contentment

Henry Ford always bought flowers for his wife from a shop every Friday evening. Once he asked the old florist, 'Gentleman, you have a good shop. Why not open a branch?'

Florist: 'Sir, then what?'

Ford: 'You'll then have several branches in Detroit.'

Florist: 'Then what?'

Ford: 'Then all over USA.'

Florist: 'And then?'

Ford (*angrily*): 'Damn it, you'll then be able to relax.'

Florist, 'What do you think I'm doing now?'

Ford walked away sheepishly.